OPERA and its STARS

MABEL WAGNALLS

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To Ann, the sweetest songbird of
them all, on her birthday
December 6, 1925.

OPERA AND ITS STARS

Maria Jeritza

Amelita Galli-Curci

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Marcella Sembrich

Lilli Lehmann

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Emma Eames

Emma Calvé

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Mary Garden

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Lillian Nordica

OPERA AND ITS STARS

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MUSIC AND STORIES OF THE ENDURING OPERAS AND A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH THE WORLD'S FAMOUS SOPRANOS

By

MABEL WAGNALLS

Author of "Miserere," "The Rose-bush of a Thousand Years," "The Palace of Danger," "Letters to Lithopolis, from O. Henry to Mabel Wagnalls," etc.

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To
Those Who Love Music But Have
No Opportunity to Familiarize Themselves
With Grand Opera
This Book is Respectfully Dedicated

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FOREWORD

THE normal child who makes early acquaintance with Grand Opera will, at the same time, acquire a wide knowledge of literature, history, and mythology, and an understanding of music in general. What is learned indirectly and of one's own volition always makes the deepest impress. A child who hears the "Hamlet" of Thomas, soon after seeks out and reads with joy the "Hamlet" of Shakespeare. "Orfeo ed Euridice" turns him wonderingly to Greek myths; "Semiramide" and "Aïda" send him questing to the encyclopedia. "The Huguenots" starts an interest in French history. All the while, too, the language of music becomes clear to him: he learns and senses its boundless capacity to express and create emotion.

Turn him loose later on in the concert hall: symphonies, sonatas and tone-poems then will not deluge him as meaningless torrents of sound. His mind and ear and imagination will have become so responsive that the whole mighty art is panoramic and plain to him. Without learning a note or training a finger, he still finds himself at home and not a foreigner in the glorious realm of music. He will create his own imagery and see visions that reflect the glow of the passing harmonies.

To him, who thus listens to the noble and the great in music, life, even at its worst, can never be wholly drab or depressing.

My own acquaintance with Grand Opera began early, and my enthusiasm and joy have never waned: the wonder of it steadily grows.

Many years ago, an editor-friend, Mr. Edgar S. Werner, of *Werner's Magazine,* marked the keen interest I showed as I listened to an opera-excerpt at a concert. He himself was not thrilled—but I was. He wondered why, and he asked me the reason.

So astonished was he at my ready tale about the opera-selection just heard—its story, and the marvelous adequacy of the music illumining it—that he asked me to write out what I had told him.

This I did; penning my impressions of "Faust" from memory, without a glance at the score, for I had heard the opera eight or nine times. Mr. Werner promptly published the article and contracted with me for twelve more—one a month. I worked hard that year, for I found myself unfitted to dash off any other opera-description without minute study of the score. And the more I delved into them the more I found to study. If my readers of that year learned as much as I did, I surely was something of a benefactor.

As a result of these articles I was asked to interview some of the stars. This indeed required courage: I was young and very worshipful of genius. Who was I that I should walk up to the throne of a Goddess and ask any question I chose! Madame Sembrich was the first who heeded my request. (She is ever the first to help others on their way.) Little she dreamed how trembling and adoring was the timid reporter-person who knocked at her door. I had once stood for hours in the snow at the stage-entrance of the Opera-house in Berlin, late at night, just for a glimpse of this great diva as she hurried to her carriage.

After achieving a talk with the supreme Sembrich I

never had difficulty in meeting the other stars—save Mary Garden—but that is another story.

Later, I collected the two series of articles which were published in book-form. Since then, whenever I have had nothing urgent to do, I have found myself usually either attending an operatic performance, or reading over the printed score; studying and loving it, and marveling more and more at the genius and patience that created it.

So my stories of the Operas, and of the stars that sing them, have multiplied and grown into the present volume. My knowledge has trailed along—but by no means, I fear, kept apace—with the astounding growth of Grand Opera in New York.

To the ultra music-pedant, however, Opera of any sort is anathema. Absolute-music is his demand: he delights in soul-soarings untethered to earth. But not all can at will thus disassociate their dual selves: they fail to find in absolute-music—music sans program-title or fanciful description—the key that ushers them "beyond the beyond."

Grand Opera it is that fills the want of giving expression to and revealing our encompassing soul-life—that palpitant reality, however veiled, which intermingles with, and participates in, every thought and action of this world.

Grand Opera bestows upon us a temporary clairvoyance. By means of the unceasing music—music that reflects and shares in every emotion or event portrayed—we are enabled to perceive, unconsciously to sense, the mighty truth that we live and have our being in a higher sphere right now—however mundane may appear all things about us. In Grand Opera we catch the comple-

ment of life, the soul-harmony or discord—the melody or tumult—our every thought and act evokes. The characters in Grand Opera can never evade or elude the glory or damnation of the music they live in; the music called forth by their own deeds, thoughts and purposes.

This symbolism in Grand Opera may not be recognized or realized by half or a third, or a tenth, of the audience. But it is there none the less and its power is felt. In the words of James Gibbons Huneker, prose-poet, savant and musician:

"Symbolism, a soft green star, is but a pin-prick in the inverted bowl of the night, but it sings like a flame in thin glass."

Elsewhere he says: "The world will find wholesome reaction in the study of music from its spiritual side; its inner life."

And last but most noteworthy is his assertion that: "The marvelous intuition of Pythagoras was correct, that music is the basis of all human development."

So in spite of some of the Wise Men of Music; they who know the stars but who fail, it seems to me, to recognize the beneficent and ultimate purpose of their influence—in spite of these, I maintain and herald my belief that Grand Opera fills a human need that is far and away beyond that of giving pleasure.

I joy, too, in boldly claiming that my views are verified by the steady growth of Grand Opera—its hold on the people. Kings and kingdoms may fall, wars may crumble and devastate empires, but Grand Opera pursues its own harmonious way: for the Song of Humanity, life's overtone, as depicted on the lyric stage, must and always will be heard.

MABEL WAGNALLS.

Amelita Galli-Curci

OPERA AND ITS STARS

CHAPTER I

GALLI-CURCI—A SONG-BIRD OF THE NIGHT

THERE was war over all the land: darkness of spirit enveloped the earth: the heart of the world was sad—when, all unheralded, a new star appeared. Galli-Curci!

Her name was suddenly on every one's lips. Such a stunning, easy, lilting, yet determined sort of name: you liked to speak it just to make it known that you knew how Italian vowels and consonants should be spoken. It was fun to feel superior to the crowd who called it "Cursi." Yes—the name was everywhere, but as yet no one had heard her, and there was no fanfare of European fame. Whence, then, the great acclaim?—the resounding echo of that strange new name in music?

At last we discovered her—not the singer—but her voice. A shower of "Victor" records had been released to scatter beauty and surprize throughout the land. Each one of those round disks held within them a glowing miracle of brightness, like gleaming raindrops. In their magic whirl they mirrored the very stars of heaven, so vari-colored, high and clear were the tones of Galli-Curci in those records.

It is probably the first time in history that a great

prima donna has become world-famous before making her début in the world's center—which, of course, is New York. The little matter of being famous in Italy or France or even England no longer counts—to New Yorkers.

Her records began to be talked of like the latest best-seller in books. Not to have heard her "Caro Nome" made you as *déclassé* as not to have read "Main Street" or "This Freedom." And then came news of a début in Chicago—a great success, etc.

But this was all wrong—not at all as it should be. Tho the Star of Bethlehem chose to rest above a stable, no star of music ever yet had sought the zenith from the region of the stock-yards. New York shrugged its shoulders—but we still could not ignore those Galli-Curci records. I think they sort of infuriated us. That Chicago affair rankled. "Let her come"—was the New York attitude.—"We will listen, but if she doesn't come up to those records—!" As one paper threateningly stated—"All that Galli-Curci has to do is to equal her own records!" No slight requirement this—tho the layman might suppose that if she could do it once she could do it every time. Oh—the unthinking uninitiate! To him who does not know—let me explain. When making a record—if one note is a shade sharp, or a shade flat; or a *soupçon* too long; or too brief; or too loud or too soft; or too suddenly attacked; or too suddenly let go; or too bright; or too breathy; or—tho the tone itself be as desired—if the syllable that goes with it is not superlatively enunciated; or if it is so sharply sibilated as to mar the attack on the next tone; or if the tone, tho of perfect quality, be crescendoed or diminuendoed with not quite your best art; or (getting away

from that particular tone) if one of your pauses fails to fit perfectly with the accompaniment; or if at one point the accompaniment overbalances your voice; or if your voice overweighs the accompaniment; or your staccatos are a bit blurred; or your legatos not smooth, or if—, or if—but there is no end to these "ifs." However, when they occur in making a record you have another try, but on the stage there is no come-back. And all artists know this—oh, how they know it!—and how they think of it just before they step upon the stage! No wonder they are nervous, temperamental, ready to shriek if a feather blows by, or they encounter the unexpected in any form whatever before an important appearance.

So at last Galli-Curci came to conquer the City of Dreadful Might. Her advance-fame induced us to fill the Lexington Avenue Opera House: to condescend to consider the possibility of real art appearing on the "East Side"—the Abomination of Desolation to the Diamond Horseshoe crowd. We condescended to come, and, worse yet, to listen to the opera "Dinorah!" This was asking a good deal of a Wagner-fed audience with a decided taste for Rimsky-Korsakoff and Prokoffief. No one had ever heard "Dinorah," tho of course we knew the "Shadow Song"—all the albums of Grand Opera Arias prized in our youth, "Opera Treasures," "Pearls of the Opera," etc., included this aria. But what of the plot? No one knew this. It is not fashionable nowadays to study librettos; one goes to opera-recitals.

As for the plot of "Dinorah"—even a Grand-Opera recitalist would have trouble making it clear. With your utmost endeavor all you can remember of the story after

hearing the opera is a vague impression of a moonstruck girl with a goat. Yes,—it is a live goat! This goat is always at *Dinorah's* heels, and she is forever wandering over the scenery—over mountains and brooks and things. She even wanders up on the roof of the cottage she lives in, the goat always following her. (Goats are good climbers, that's why it had to be a goat.) The girl and the goat wander around for some time on that sloping, precarious roof. I believe this particular perambulation is intended to indicate madness. It does! Of course she sings all the time she is wandering. She comes off the roof at last, and then spying her shadow in the moonlight she invites it to dance with her. Now follows the famed "Shadow Song"—"Shadow Dance," it is sometimes called. About the only time in the opera that *Dinorah* stands still is while singing this aria which constantly affirms she is blithely dancing. The trouble lies in the fact that the music is unmercifully difficult, and to be "blithe" in your feet becomes an impossibility when a devil's dance of high notes is going on in your throat. Even the goat is *non grata* in this scene; it is discreetly called out, or pulled out, of sight.

So Galli-Curci stood still and alone on the Lexington Avenue Opera House stage that memorable night when she startled New York with the "Shadow Song" of *Dinorah.* And—ye Gods!—what she did with that song! There she stood calm and still as a sibylline statue—so effortless was her art that she did not seem to be singing at all. Just a nod, a smile, and music materialized all about her; the air was full of it, teeming, dancing, shot through, swirling with scales and chromatics, with high notes left swinging in the heavens, and trills that laughed at you, made merry and echoed

back at you, after you thought them long ended and done for.

We were all out of breath when she finished—out of breath from the sheer tensity of listening. We supposed that she who had sown the whirlwind must be quite beyond recall—I mean this literally. Imagine our amaze when she came before the curtain and with smiling ease, in full glare of the footlights, gave us again the entire "Shadow Song"—that night-bloom among arias, heavy-weighted and bowed down with its tropical overgrowth of colorature.

There was no longer any doubt about Galli-Curci: she was not only a new star—but a fixed star. It was no longer a condescension to trail over to Lexington Avenue; it was a luxury. It was no uncommon thing to pay twenty-five dollars for the privilege of a seat when she sang. And this during the war, when our hearts and our pocket-books were bleeding. One enraptured poet in a glowing sonnet thanked God for sending us this gleam of brightness—Galli-Curci—during our days of darkness. And, most notable of all tributes, other prima donnas came to hear her and were not ashamed to tell it. Geraldine Farrar generously acclaimed her and said that her tone-quality was lovely as the heart of a pansy.

Galli-Curci, as I have said, became at once a fixed star. But however "fixed" these high lights may be in music's firmament, on terra firma, be it known, they flit about like will-o'-the-wisps. You think they are here and you find they are there. You read of "Dinorah" in New York, write a letter the next day and receive answer the next week from New Mexico. Not telescopes but telegrams are needed when searching for these stars.

Finally I captured Galli-Curci at the Hotel Ambassa-

dor. By way of experiment I asked below stairs for Mrs. Homer Samuels—the elevator boys knew at once whom I meant. Above, at her apartment, it was Mr. Homer Samuels who greeted me at the door. This imparted a new thrill to a seasoned prima-donna interviewer. For the first time in my life I was to have the experience of interviewing a singer and her husband together. I had met French maids at such interviews, and French poodles, and mothers sometimes—these latter always interested and interesting—and other artists have been present and other interviewers, but never yet a husband. Mr. Samuels, a straightforward, friendly voiced plain American, was not present as an interpreter, for Madame Galli-Curci speaks fluent English. No, it was clear at once that he was present for no other reason than that he is always present. On the concert stage he is her accompanist, and off the stage they are constantly working together. When preparing new rôles and studying new music he—thorough musician that he is—is always at her side studying with her, considering each phrase, advising, encouraging, counseling. Mutual work, mutual need of each other's abilities—there you have it!—the secret, the only one, to insure a happy marriage.

Flashlight-photos of Madame were being taken when I arrived; I had to wait a few moments in her bedroom. My chief impression of this room was a battlement of open wardrobe-trunks—their contents bursting forth; an upheaval of flaming colors; creations in yellow, orange, and rose, with comet-like tails trailing over the parapets; there were whole cloud-banks of chiffon and tossed-up tulle.

These artists, it would seem, live, breathe, and have

their being in full-dress evening garb. Madame had sung the night before in Philadelphia, the next night she was to appear at the Hippodrome. What a racing, hurricane life it is: work—work—work, some repose between, then again—work—work—work.

The photographer, having finished his flashing, made a formidable exit considerably impeded by his lighting-machine, camera, tripod, and plates. Madame herself opened the door for him. I mention this to show how democratic she has become. Descendants of the Spanish nobility (she is this on her mother's side) do not usually open doors for others; they rarely do it for themselves.

Without any ceremony the diva soon had me seated beside her on a sofa in her salon. She is an easy talker; almost intuitive. Her first remark was a startling sequence to my recent thoughts:

"Work is everything in life. To have something urgent to do every moment—this is the secret of happiness."

Madame Galli-Curci can say this with the voice of authority. She began work at the piano, hard work—hours every day—when she was five years of age. Yes—they do this in Europe; they know there that art is long. Here we wait until the young aspirant is ten years old or more and then we consider the idea of having "her take up music," sweetly unconscious that it is already years and years too late.

But the little Amelita's parents knew better. They were musicians. Her grandparents, too, had pursued the art strenuously; had aimed at the stars and attained the spotlight. Her grandmother was a prima donna and her grandfather directed the orchestra. (I foresee Mr. Samuels with his back to the audience.)

So our little Signorina—who was born in Milan—began hard work at five, and eleven years later made her public début as a pianist. This was no school-girl graduation performance. Indeed, I doubt whether a Milanese audience could be induced to listen to a mixed program of class-room achievements, for Milan is the heart and home of all that is highest in art, religion, and music. There historic La Scala guards the art of song—a perpetual mother to Grand Opera: there religion is upheld by the Duomo—that immortal dream in tender stone before whose portals even an atheist feels impelled to bow.

And there Leonardo's "Last Supper" in dim, hushed majesty proclaims what the art of painting has been and should be.

Yes, Milan knows the best, and judges all comers accordingly. So it means much to make a successful début there. It means much to play there the "Abegg" of Schumann or the great "Fantaisie" by Chopin: both of these were on that first program of Signorina Galli—pianist—who had no idea then of ever becoming a prima donna in Grand Opera. To be a world-famous pianist—that was her dream. But the young débutante was a frail little body and the hard steady labor of eight hours a day—union-work of hand, heart, and mind—was wearing upon her. You, who have not known the experience—just try it one day—try sitting eight hours at the keyboard, conscientiously striving to improve each note that you strike, and to memorize them, too, as you go along: try it one day as an experiment, just to learn how long—how unendingly long—that last eighth hour can be.

The strain was too great for Signorina Galli in those

days—especially the heavy chord-practise and crescendos. The realization of this must have been a hard blow after so many years of work. But she was too merry-hearted by nature to weep over it. By all the saints, no! no!—she sang instead.

A pretty moral lies here, well applicable to all life. She was always singing—and thought nothing of it.

In Italy, every one sings. You never hear whistling on the streets of Milan, but any moment, anywhere, you hear singing—glorious singing. In the middle of the night, or the middle of the day, you may hear a laborer at his work, or returning from it, trolling an opera aria, a barcarole or a serenade, like a young Caruso—and he thinks nothing of it. So, too, little Amelita was always singing—and giving it never a thought.

Mascagni, an old friend of the family, was the first to suggest that she develop her voice: he knew she had the other qualifications so necessary to a singing career—a knowledge of music, of interpretation, of sight-reading. She had also the habit of regular work. Mascagni, you may be sure, knew the value of this—the foundation of all achievement.

There is lassitude in the air of Italy: the average Italian has more of repose in his nature than of purpose. But Amelita Galli had the urge of the artist-instinct—a lashing whip that drives one on to a dogged persistent endeavor. They all know this. Farrar has taken the public into her confidence and splendidly confessed, "Others have voices as good as mine—and talent, and health, and good looks—but *I worked.*"

Other little girls in Milan were good singers; maybe one in the next home to Amelita had a natural voice as ringing as hers, but that possible rival did not have the

inborn ambition—the unfaltering will that bids one refrain from all activities and pleasures that do not contribute to the cherished art. If you still have any doubts as to Galli-Curci's compelling all-conquering perseverance, listen to this:

"I still practise at actual tone-placing two hours every day of my life. I still am learning and improving—always making discoveries, finding new resonance-chambers for the tone, little shades of difference in the timbre. Oh, there is no end to art. If you think you are finished"—she threw up her hands—"then you *are* finished! You are dead!"

Again speaking of work, she told of her début in Grand Opera two years after she began voice-study. Let all incipient prima donnas remember that this was *thirteen* years after her music-study began.

"*Gilda* in 'Rigoletto' was my first rôle. I learned the part in eight days. I couldn't do that now—or I wouldn't do it! When one is young one attempts anything." This début in "Rigoletto" took place in Otranto.

I looked blank—my geography failing me. She kindly explained.

"Otranto is down in the heel of the boot—the lowest point in Italy."

"She began at the bottom and worked up," Mr. Samuels threw in cheerily.

I was curious about her recent unconventional uprising out of the West. Musicians of renown, like the Magi of old, were wont to come from the East. The mystery was made clear. She had been singing in South America.

We Northerners are prone to forget South America except when there is an earthquake down there or the

rumble of a revolution. We forget that it is a region of bright colors and song-birds, and of some civilizations ancient beyond compute. They have music there too—opera-houses, where they wildly adore you if you sing well, and damn you forever if you don't. Galli-Curci sang well—I take it—for she came forth serene with a smile on her face, and a "Victrola" contract in sight. A "Victor" agent in that lower hemisphere was so impressed by her singing that he made a quick leap across the equator, came to Camden and told of his find. Thus it happened that Galli-Curci became known to us first as a disembodied voice on the "Victor."

After her record-making stop-over in Camden, she came to New York for a brief rest before returning to Spain where she soon was to sing. Galli-Curci enjoyed those few days of relaxation—spending some of her South American money, seeing the sights and being one of the crowd. It is not a bad thing sometimes to let go of high flights and submerge oneself in the multitude. In a crowd sometimes we meet Fate. Destiny dons many guises. Galli-Curci on Broadway met an old singing teacher she had known in Milan.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "Unknown and unheralded—this won't do." He piloted her at once to Campanini, who was then directing Chicago's opera. The rest followed naturally.

Madame Galli-Curci may once have been frail, but she does not look so now. Great singing—or, is it success?—always agrees with one. I asked whether her great reputation did not add to her nervousness each time she appeared.

"Oh, yes, indeed. I feel the responsibility of it; the knowledge that I must come up to the expectation of the

audience. It is a terrific strain. We must keep very calm, but we are only human—and each time we fear something may happen to upset us, something mar the repose without which we can not do justice to ourselves or the composer. Every artist must work out his own method of safeguarding his art. He must think of it all the time; it must always come first. Just as a mother instinctively guards a child before it is born, so we prepare for each performance; each one is a creation. We must manage somehow to think pleasant thoughts, and be peaceful."

There's a creed for you! Who dares to deny that Great Art is close kin to Religion? The artist—truly great—must captain his own soul. And this is a mastery that can not pretentiously be assumed; the cloven foot would conspicuously stamp forth. No—the great artist unconsciously, but always, speaks as one having authority—the authority that is born of self-mastery. An authority that bears with it—strange to say—an atmosphere of genuine simplicity and absence of self-consciousness or posing. Of course, I have Madame Galli-Curci particularly in mind as I write this. A more charming, genial, gentle personality it has never been my privilege to meet. Her face is luminous; it lights up, and is far more beautiful than her pictures. She has youth—one must be near to judge of this—photos can deceive; so can the footlights. Her heavy hair is untinted—her complexion is exquisite, her eyes and smile know no art beyond the brightness of a glowing spirit.

But do not suppose that a singer who has soared to the zenith is therefore immune from terrestrial influences far from heavenly. The higher one gets the more one encounters of subterfuge. Madame Galli-Curci admitted

this, but added firmly: "People I don't like, I don't think about. I will not remember the unpleasant things."

I descended from the starry regions of the Hotel Ambassador's twentieth floor with these parting words still singing in my brain. The great Galli-Curci had unconsciously culled from her own life's struggle a motto it were well to print upon the tablet of one's heart.

CHAPTER II

"RIGOLETTO"

EVERYONE knows "Rigoletto." It is difficult to think of anything in the way of real music that out-rivals it in popularity. You might call it a monumental achievement in broadcasting: Verdi forefathered the radio when he wrote it, for its melodies literally spread in all directions—were known everywhere at once—after the first performance at Venice in 1851. The Italians are quick at the trick of catching a new tune and speeding it on its way.

How gracious, how beneficent, how endearing, are the immortal melodies that greet us and meet us as we pass through the grim canyon of Life: fleet-footed they flit by us—yet still tarry with us. Once heeded—we are free to dismiss them or recall them at will. Close to our consciousness unnoticed they may be for years, yet ever they hover about us—these gladsome, uplifting, swift-winged messengers of Heaven. Who willingly would forego the sweet thrill of recognition that livens the heart whenever "La Donna è Mobile" is heard? Imagine, if you can, the dry dullness of life sans these happy encounters with the world's master melodies—melodies so great that they never tire. True music—the genuinely inspired—be it classic, romantic or futuristic, never fails at each hearing to discover new beauty: true music is eternally young.

Ask ony one you meet—a passer-by on the street—what he knows of "Rigoletto" and he will name at once several arias and the quartette: he may even prove his statement by whistling or humming them—all this even

tho he never has heard the opera. But try asking even a confirmed opera-goer about the plot! You will find him so familiar with "Rigoletto" that he has never bothered to look it up. He will answer you somewhat in this fashion—"Why everyone knows the story of 'Rigoletto' —the Court Jester—they steal his daughter—she's the one that sings 'Caro Nome'—and then in the last act—after the quartet she is killed by mistake when *Rigoletto* tries to revenge himself on the Duke—he's the one, that sings 'La Donna è Mobile.' "

That's about as much as you will get from the average Metropolitan subscriber. Opera-plots are thus handed down in the old families from one generation to the next, together with the parterre seats and boxes. At least it was formerly so—and maybe it was a good idea to avoid the specific when preparing the young heir and heiress to attend some of these life-dramas. But in this day of grace, when the merry flapper forestalls all subtle information, make the story clear by all means and perchance the moral—that attaches to all works of greatness—the moral, too, may linger.

The story of "Rigoletto" is irrefutably a great one—Victor Hugo wrote it. "Le Roi s'amuse," it first was called. Edwin Booth, enacting its English version, called it "The Fool's Revenge." Great passions envisaged by great language must needs live long and be acclaimed: but when illumined too by great music, when the myriad emotions warring in the human heart—unfathomed still by all the power of words and action—when these are further probed by music which charges with a clarifying glow all the encompassing atmosphere, then even more than length of days rests upon the work of genius.

Come with me now, back through the centuries, with Victor Hugo and Verdi. They dreamed it all first: let us follow after them, far away it now seems, to the white marble splendor of Mantua, a pompous little dukedom, agleam in the Italian sunlight but as prolific of profligacy and dark deeds as Ferrara or any other romance-region of the history-haloed peninsula. But don't take my word for this; listen, instead, to the prelude before the curtain rises. Only one page in length is this prelude—but the Judgment of Heaven sounds in it, and the torment of deepest Hell. Listen well to this prelude—it is a miracle of brevity; a lifetime of tragedy compressed into a capsule. But it is enough—it gives us the magic vision to see through and underneath the tinsel merriment and jest depicted on the stage as the curtain rises. A ball-room in the ducal palace shimmers before us, with other arched corridors and festive halls in the rear, all brilliant with candelabras. Sixteenth century ladies and courtiers are in the background—bowing, dancing, coquetting—a regular Watteau-fan effect.

The music, so recently somber, is suddenly ablaze with the gay insolence of youth, of life, of folly. Oh, it is superb!—the contrast of that prelude—that glimpse of the Infinite—with this deluding dazzle, this dance of the molecules. It cuts deep. But we soon forget it, and are carried away by the present glamour, the jocund music, the faery-scene. The unfolding story soon absorbs us.

The reigning Duke and one of his followers step to the foreground conversing confidentially.

This debonair *Duke*—who sings tenor and wears white satin—is wholly absorbed in his various illicit amours. He is discussing one of these with the courtier

at his elbow—a bit of recitative carried on above the rococo involutions of the dance-music in the background —music indescribably dainty, of piquant rhythm, and very, very pianissimo.

The opening lines of this recitative dialog between the *Duke* and his sycophant, *Borso,* are a slam-bang *tour-de-force* on the part of the librettist—grotesquely concise, far from poetic, far from human, yet none can deny they are terse and telling! Here—bundled and hustled together, entwined in ten lines—are all the bothersome but essential facts that precede the action of a plot. Note how minutely explanatory is the language of a sixteenth century duke when casually talking in a ballroom to one of his closest friends—one who presumably knows it all anyway:

Duke, "Soon 'twill be time my adventure were concluded with yon fair girl of humble antecedents."

Borso, "She whom you follow every day to matins?"

Duke, "For three months it has been my custom so to do."

Borso, "Where is she dwelling?"

Duke, "A street obscure and distant, where each night an unknown man is admitted."

Borso, "And does he know that you are now her lover?"

Duke, "He knows not."

That "he knows not" matters little—what does matter is that the audience should know: this is the point all-important. As for "yon fair girl," be it understood, she is not now present in the flesh: only the grandiloquence of Grand Opera, and the *Duke's* mental vision, make it possible to designate her as "yon." But the librettist has done his part: he has flung his facts over the foot-

lights—let the audience perceive them or leave them. Right now you may as well know one other fact of which the *Duke* himself is ignorant. This girl, who dwells in an "obscure street" and who has "antecedents equally vague," is the Court Jester's daughter; the "unknown man" whom the ducal spies have seen admitted at night, is the girl's own father. *Rigoletto*—the hunchback, the fool, the wit, the reprobate, ever seconding his master in all his sub-rosa depravities—has kept one shrine in his heart unsoiled: his only child, his beautiful *Gilda,* he has guarded all her life, and kept her very existence unknown to the tainted company encircling the ducal throne.

A few more words between the *Duke* and *Borso,* as they observe the dancers, reveal the fact that one of the ladies present, the *Countess Ceprano,* is also a close favorite of the *Duke.* His incautious admiration plainly worded, prompts *Borso* to warn him of the lady's husband standing near. *A bas les maris!*—they are a nuisance: the *Duke* shrugs his shoulders and by way of diversion sings a heart-to-heart aria to himself, as it were: whatever stray husbands may be hovering near—they certainly are not supposed to be hearing it. He sings of fair ladies—"they all are the same to me: if this one requites my love to-day I long for another to-morrow." But regardless of stage husbands—whether they hear it or not—all the world knows by heart this sparkling ariette: a rainbow bubble of *insouciance.* That music-missionary of the world—the Italian organ-grinder—has not paced our streets in vain.

After this light-hearted touch-and-go song the *Duke* addresses the *Countess Ceprano* with burning asides, of momentary seriousness, while the rest of the company

dance the minuet. The instrumental music at this point is furnished by a group of court players in the background—a tiny band of stringed instruments. They quaintly intone the delicate, fine-spun dance-suites of the period: the minuet, the sarabande, the bourrée and gavotte. During their undertone *tête-à-tête,* which carefully follows in musical phrase the grace and melody of the accompanying minuet, the *Countess* warns her lover, the *Duke,* of her husband's aroused suspicions. But presently, when the minuet ceases, the careless lady accepts the *Duke's* proffered arm and they make their exit together while the furious husband watches them, and while *Rigoletto,* the Jester, just entered, heartlessly watches him.

"What disturbs my good lord?" he mercilessly asks in leering tones that the others may hear and join in with his laugh. The *Count*—too interested in his wife and the *Duke* to resent the fool's insult—impatiently shrugs his shoulder and follows after the ruthless pair. *Rigoletto* laughs mockingly, while the dance-music still goes on.

Rigoletto—gray-haired 'neath his fool's cap, and deformed 'neath his motley—has grown old in court infamy: his sole business there, he considers, is to keep the company merry, no matter who winces at his jibes, and also to keep himself in good grace with the *Duke.*

After his broad-grinned laugh at the *Count,* in which the others have joined, he, too, goes out—follows after the promising tragedy—stuff for new jests—there is always fun to be found in the antics of discomforted husbands.

And still the dance goes on. It is now the lace-ruffled powder-puffed perigourdine that steps its tip-toeing way

on the stage and touches off on the instruments a swaying cobweb of miniature music.

A change of rhythm, which always means a change of mood, brings on a recurrence of the first high-stepping, purse-proud, princely flair of ball-room music; regnant again in the orchestra. But like all gilded gaiety it merely serves as a barrage to blind us to the lurking anguish of life. Back of the panting waltz theme, a bit of recitative on the stage carries forward the brewing tragedy, which is as yet mostly a matter of laughter—heartless—unthinking laughter: tragedy very often begins with a laugh. *Murulla,* another one of the *Duke's* go-betweens, has entered in a high state of hilarity. He has discovered that *Rigoletto*—none other—is the incognito who visits the Duke's latest inamorata at night. Not knowing him to be a father, they suppose him a lover. *Rigoletto,* a lover! The Hunchback playing the rôle of Adonis! What drollery! We, too, almost laugh, for our senses are dulled to the pity of it by the pounding disdain of that dance music.

The *Duke* and *Rigoletto* re-enter, shortly followed by the still scowling husband. How to get rid of this shadow is, for the moment, the *Duke's* uppermost quandary. *Rigoletto,* always agrin, suggests poison, exile, or decapitation. Suspecting the drift of their colloquy—especially the asides of the Jester which are always a combination of venom and frolic—the *Count* is close to the point of skewering him on his sword. But the *Duke* hushes over the *contretemps,* gives the Fool a good scolding and bids the others not to mind what he says. The *Count,* however, far from mollified, still rages at the *Jester* and asks the others to join him in compassing the fool's downfall. They join him to the extent

of agreeing that of late *Rigoletto* has been far too audacious and daring in his jokes. The *Count's* threat of vengeance promises a tang of adventure that appeals to them: they echo his threat and enjoy *Rigoletto's* discomfiture. Even the *Duke* plainly tells him that the wrath he has stirred up may fall back upon him. There is prophecy in these words, tho the *Duke* does not know it —does not even mean them as he utters them. Few words at court are seriously spoken: they are mere empty sounds tossed lightly about—while ever and always the music of the dance goes on. Give heed to naught else—listen only to it—a precept this which the *Duke* assiduously lives up to. "Pleasure calls us," he loudly proclaims, and now even the dancers come forward and join in with the hilarious chorus his Highness has started.

"Pleasure calls us. Beauty beckons. Seize the moments while they last."

Uproariously they "seize" both the moment and the music, then suddenly—hard upon their merriment—a disturbing voice outside causes a listening hush, with the last loud chord of the chorus left hanging in the air.

"I will see him!—hold, villain! Let me pass—" or something to that effect, cries the voice outside, and then there enters at back of stage another enraged nobleman: not a husband this time, but a father. The courtiers all know him, and know his plaint: it is the venerable *Count Monterone*—come to hurl maledictions upon the *Duke's* long-accustomed head. This is by no means the first time that an angry father has denounced him as the cause of his daughter's undoing, tho never before—we infer—has one dared to break in upon a festal occasion in the palace.

The old man assails the *Duke* with a storm of words —a tornado of reckless wrath.

Rigoletto—always alert for a chance to make fun—tells the *Duke* to let him act as his substitute. He promptly struts forward like his master and gives mocking audience to the aged courtier.

Why forever assail me with thy daughter's downfall? But, I am gracious, good Seignor, I pardon thy treason."

The old man—more outraged than ever—again apostrophizes the *Duke*. "You rob me first of my daughter's honor, then permit your buffoon to deride me. Do more if you will, bid your headsman to kill me, still I swear I will follow you—my mangled form shall haunt you." He is terribly in earnest—this white-haired magnifico garbed in black velvet. The music, too, is black and ominous: it is recitative with a vengeance—the vengeance sounding loud in the orchestra. When it comes to seething dark-hued emotions, the canny composer always calls into use his full equipment of chromatics and tremolos—especially the latter—with a judicious use of sharply contrasted fortes and pianissimos. In the hands of a master, this time-worn paraphernalia becomes blood-curdling in effect. Verdi here gives to the whole orchestra a palpitant uprising of chromatic octaves, hurried, breathless, crashing, and then—sudden collapse among the instruments: there follows a faint tremolo on the strings, above which the old man's recitative words are heard—still thundering futile threats at the *Duke*. Three times the orchestra mounts up in a towering billow of chromatics that climax and break upon the unyielding shore of the outraged father's denunciations. However futile his words may seem to the gay assemblage in that

gleaming hall, they have in them a carrying sting, unpleasant to hear.

The *Duke* finally cries, "Enough!" and orders his guard to arrest the intruder. They do this, but not before the fearless grandee has flamed upon *Rigoletto*—well-known underling in all the *Duke's* nefarious intrigues.

"Thou Viper! Thou vile Buffoon!"

The old man trembles in mighty wrath as he hurls upon the *Jester* all the fury of a "father's curse." There is sudden fortissimo, both in orchestra and voice, as he thunders forth the malevolent words:

"Be thou accursed!"

Three fff's are the composer's directions at this point, then—a moment later—three times pianissimo is the sign that marks the bated consternation of the listening courtiers—especially *Rigoletto.* He would hide his dismay with a smile—but he can not: he cowers instead, for the curse of a father strikes home—he thinks of his own daughter: he shrinks from that curse: he cringes.

Sixteenth century curses, you see, were taken very seriously. Not only the recipient, but every hearer is for the moment horrified. Those now on the stage unanimously bid the old man begone with his audacious revilings: but they do not shout their resentment—they sing it very softly—*sotto voce:* in fact we half suspect that each one is making the sign of the cross. These Mantuan courtiers are frankly frightened: we imagine them feeling as did the crowd in the Temple that was told, two thousand years ago, how to begin throwing stones.

But qualms of conscience are seldom long-lasting, tho we do find here four full creeping pages of it, musically speaking. But the instruments are sparingly used: very

few are needed to sound, low down in the orchestra, the whisperings of the still small voice. By the time we turn to the fifth page both chorus and orchestra have mounted higher and are well on the way to a comforting conscience-stilling crescendo. Brasses, basses and bassoons, to say nothing of wood-wind and horns, now fall into line to augment the splendid uprise of sound. The chorus touches climax, the trumpets top it off and then—as is usual in Grand Opera, when all shout together loud and long and the trumpets join in, then—like Jericho's walls the curtain falls.

When next it rises we are shown an intricate setting. The hour is midnight, but a gracious moon reveals a walled garden on the left; in the center a street touching the wall, and on the right a glimpse of *Count Ceprano's* palace. The enclosed garden, huddles about the doorway of a balconied cottage which is the guarded home of *Rigoletto's* cherished daughter.

There is dark-hued music in the orchestra—a rumble of contra-basses 'neath tentative chords that are soft and shrouded. *Rigoletto* enters, depressed and troubled. Black thoughts enwrap him and transform his usual bearing even more than does the dark cloak and hat he wears. He delays unlocking the gate. Where has gone his wonted alacrity, his restless eagerness to see again the star of his life, his one delight, his precious only child? There is an instinct still stronger than love, tho it may be a very part of it—born from it: fear, a nameless fear, this it is that bows *Rigoletto.* The nearer he comes to his daughter the greater grows his despondency.

"A father's curse he laid upon me!"

Neither *Montrone* nor any one else knew him to be a father: what awful chance directed that particular curse

to be flung at him? Thus he muses in well-phrased barytone recitative.

But any sort of a curse, I take it, must have occasioned unpleasant reveries to one who walked alone on the streets of Mantua at midnight, any month or year of the sixteenth century. Strange characters lurked about those gloomy corners. A figure, black-draped like himself, furtively accosts *Rigoletto*. The down-cast *Jester,* supposing him a beggar, says he has nothing to give. That this was no beggar *Rigoletto* might easily have known had he but heeded the orchestra. But so it is in life, our ears are ever dull to the subtle voices, mood-revealing, all about us, everywhere. The radio has lately given an inkling of the encompassing sounds we fail to cognate. In Grand Opera the unpausing orchestra pierces the veil of concealment; thought-forces, heart-throbs unworded, are made audible to those who have an ear to hear. But *Rigoletto* soon learns from the man's words that he is neither beggar nor robber. Such puny trades he spurns: he deals in sword-thrusts: will guarantee to make way with your worst enemy—for a price. A professional murderer peddling his wares! A common vocation this seems to have been in midnight Mantua of long ago.

Rigoletto, disgusted but diverted, asks casually what it costs "to slay a nobleman." This idle question, and succeeding ones, would never have been asked had he but heard aright the soft, insinuating, muted melody now permeating the perfumed air of this moon-gleaming Italian night. That melody bodes no good: it is far too saccharine: it lacks the husky devil-may-care, kill-or-be-killed, sort of music one would expect from a perfectly frank, pay-as-you-go murderer. There is a silkiness to that melody that means more than murder: the smile of

Satan lurks in it. *Rigoletto* heartily loathes this medieval night-prowling adept with poignard and sword: he calls him in asides, "You demon!" "You monster!"—even while he continues to question. He does not realize that his own evil genius is luring him on to deeds undreamed of at the moment. Beware, have a care of the stray words you hear in answer to idle curiosity: they lodge in your brain, they multiply: they may finally possess you body and soul.

All this *Rigoletto,* had he listened carefully and been attuned to understand—all this he might have gleamed from the sibilant snakiness of that too-sweet melody in the orchestra.

So with half-way attention—half-way interest—he learns a good deal from the chummy assassin: he learns his name, learns too that this particular corner is his special tramping-ground: soliciting murderers divided off territory in those days much as beggars do now. *Rigoletto* learns further some details of his methods: a pleasing sister, when needs be, serves as decoy to the prospective victim, leading him to a cottage in the suburbs: there the swordsman does his work—expertly and almost painlessly: this gentle villain shows pride of profession in every reference to his swordsmanship.

Rigoletto finally bids him begone after clearly catching the fellows last words, "You may need me some day—don't forget me!"

The doleful court *Jester* watches the night-bird slink away, then grimly recognizes a kinship between them. "He slays in the dark: I stab with my tongue."

But Fate—cruel Fate—is the actual target of all the *Jester's* venom. All his life he has been kicking, stabbing, pounding wild, aimless blows at Fate—the unheed-

ing Goddess who fashioned him a monster and doomed him to a perpetual smile—mock-merriment and buffoonery—to enliven a profligate court: Fate—who denies him even the dignity of sorrow.

But ever and again, even in the midst of this lone outburst of rage, *Rigoletto* recalls that "Father's curse" flung at him. It is always sounded with the same recitative notes, the same rhythm, and the same dull orchestral chord emphasizing the final word.

"He laid upon me a father's curse."

Rigoletto shivers at the memory, tries to forget it, calls himself a fool indeed so to cringe at an old man's words.

Enough of dark musings. He resolutely unlocks the gate to the garden.

As he enters this sanctum, the music of the orchestra brightens. Oh, how it brightens! No need of our seeing the emerging moon, the blossoming shrubs, the glad rush of *Gilda* from the house as she welcomes her father—it is all plainly pictured in the music.

I marvel always, how the feel, the glow, the peace of a flowering garden can be carried to us by music. Note the music in "Faust," just before *Siebel* sings the "Flower Song," or the second act of "Lucia di Lammermoor," or "Romeo et Juliet," or, best of all—the Elysian Fields in "Orfeo ed Euridice," there is flower-music for you—the breath of peace and all the beatitudes—the edenic beauty, the gentle repose, of a simple well-loved garden. Here, too, in Verdi's opera there is a gladdening sense of breeze-blown blossoms. As *Rigoletto* enters the garden he forgets his fears, his deformity, his abhorred position in the palace. His precious *Gilda* loves him, cares not for his appearance, and knows not his profession. To all the world he is a fool; only to her he

is Father: God-given word this is to *Rigoletto*—it is all of Heaven.

Joyous as love, care-free as the morn, is the soft, buoyant melody now arising in the orchestra. But let none ever dream of a Paradise garden sans the intruding serpent. *Gilda,* woman-like, asks questions—why is she always secluded? What is her father's name? Why does he not trust her and confide in her?

Rigoletto replies that he has naught but sorrows to confide: it were useless to tell her of these. We learn that she has not long been in Mantua—she has recently come from a convent. The stream of questions, still unquelled, continues: *Gilda* asks of her mother. At once a mist falls over the music, the gladness ceases, all is drenched in the minor as *Rigoletto* sings of the one blessed episode of his life—the brief companionship with one who saw not that he was hideous, penniless, an outcast. He lost her, but another angel, his *Gilda,* was left in her place.

Sweetly sorry is *Gilda* now for the questions she has asked: she grieves with her father. They sing together a duet you will ever remember, for never have father and child been more poignantly attuned in music. Through five pages of perfect harmony and musical peace these two sing divinely in the moonlight.

Then *Gilda* forgets all about it and begins again with her recitative questions. She wishes to know of their kindred, their country and their friends. *Rigoletto* affirms that for kindred, friends, the world, the universe —he looks to her alone. Again she joins him in a rhapsodical outburst of joy—joy in the fact that she means so much to him.

Then the little pest—for such she now is—starts on

another tack: the rhythm and tone suddenly change in the orchestra as well as in her voice. The phrases are very simple now, they are coaxing and demure, and innocent! A three-year-old cooing a Paternoster could not sound more guileless than *Gilda* when she asks why she always is kept secluded, and please won't he allow her to-day to go forth for a walk in the town?

Instant terror seizes *Rigoletto:* he knows full well how his enemies—the gay Lotharios of the Court—would deem it a joyous joke to abduct the fool's daughter did they but discover that he had one. In sharp alarm he asks her, "Have you ever disobeyed me?—ever walked abroad, save to early mass?" With a straight face she answers, "No,"—the little minx! She is not telling all: we learn this from her troubled asides.

So alarmed is *Rigoletto* that he summons the duenna *Giovanna:* a God-fearing creature she looks to be: he has hired her to watch over his daughter. In reply to his questions she assures him that the door to the terrace is always locked—always locked. She repeats this much too often, but *Rigoletto's* fears are quieted, and the music softly modulates from troubled minor to harmonious major as he charges her, with all the tender fervor of a father's prayers, to guard well this flower of innocence entrusted to her care. The music here is so heart-moving in its tender appeal that we forget to note just how the over-wise *Giovanna* takes it. As for *Gilda*—she undoubtedly thinks her father old-fashioned and over-cautious, but certain it is that she loves him. She echos his song in high sweet tones assuring him that no harm can befall her. Lovely as a lullaby in its gentle rhythm, peaceful as the quiet garden and the all-caressing moon, is the music of this most dulcet duo. It is som-

nolent in its beauty—this exquisite song between father and child. There is in it the hush of hallowed memories —some sweet reminder of our dearest dreams: Sing on forever!—our soothed hearts whisper.

But it is in just such moments throughout all life that Fate—dark-browed—draws near and tragedy peers upon us. *Rigoletto* hears a sound at the gate. "Some one is there!" he cries. Every sort of alarm breaks out in the orchestra; agitato, forte, and fortissimo. *Rigoletto,* now fool indeed—as we all are when fear-haunted—opens wide the gate and rushes out into the street to throttle the marauder, whoever he may be. The prowler chances to be none other than the *Duke* himself—cloaked and incognito of course. He very deftly slips through the opened gate behind *Rigoletto's* back and, once inside the garden, uses a tree-trunk for concealment after hastily, but with lordly gesture, flinging a purse to the perfidious *Giovanna.*

None of this pantomime is seen by *Gilda* and we must clear her name to the extent of explaining that she is no party to this back-door intrigue. Her disobedience has gone no further than a frank flirtation with the handsome stranger on her way to church.

Rigoletto, failing to find the rover, soon returns. He again questions *Giovanna,* who again lies convincingly, and again he bids her never to open the gate to anyone. The *Duke* in the background hears and observes with keen interest. Much surprized and, we suspect, with gloating amusement he recognizes *Rigoletto.* Still greater his surprize when he gleans that the girl is the *Jester's* daughter: a fact that possibly adds to the zest of the affair.

With his fears somewhat appeased, *Rigoletto* now pre-

pares to leave. He sings "farewell my child" and then resumes his song of caution about "guarding this flower of innocence." *Gilda,* too, repeats her theme—"no evil can befall me." The two voices alternate in brief phrases of rondo effect until at the last, they join harmony—more and more pianissimo.

This recurrence, after the recent agitato, of their endearing tender duet, already rooted in our hearts, is welcome as bloom after blight, as the forgiveness that follows confession. Believe me, I do not exaggerate the beaming beauty, the simple splendor of this duet: it is charged with truth—deep as earth, and high as heaven—this musical expression of a father's love. It sounds a harmony so unfaltering and reposeful—one feels that Verdi has herein achieved a dim reflection of the love of God.

Gilda accompanies her father to the gate, sees it closed behind him, and then feels guilty over the falsehood she has told. *Giovanna,* wise in her ways, argues the folly of telling her father of the youth who follows her to church. What harm in that? He seems a gentleman of high bearing: he may be a nobleman—who knows?

It does not take much to start *Gilda* upon dreams of love. The orchestra leads on—it is always the forecasting shadow or sunbeam in life's path as depicted in Grand Opera. We now hear the rhythm softly change to the commonest one in the world: not the so-called "common time" of the text-books, but the three-beat swing of waltz-rhythm—the rhythm that more than all others echoes the heart's throb, the real pulse of life and its longings. But altho this potent rhythm wields its unerring beat in the bass, the melody—the proclaiming

herald of Gilda's emotions—has not the smooth-flowing legato curve of the placid, conventional waltz-theme. The phrases are hesitant, broken, uncertain: you hear a maiden alarmed at her own thoughts, but impelled none the less to word them to the night-breeze, the flowers, the moon—her love for the unknown stranger. "He need not be rich or noble, if only he will love me."

Gilda is startled by an answering voice—not *Giovanna's.* The *Duke* has waved her off the scene and stepped forward in her place. He now echoes *Gilda's* song: "He loves thee! I love thee!" He proceeds to make all manner of poetic declarations of devotion.

But the music has changed its rhythm and its tune. *Gilda* has not been raised in a convent for nothing. She knows what is expected of a young girl, the proper procedure under the circumstances, at least at first. She calls for *Giovanna*—not so that you could hear her very far—but she does call, and she does act really dismayed at finding the duenna gone. The more she realizes that Giovanna does not hear—and does not intend to hear—the more she indulges in dramatics.

"Alone and friendless! Heaven protect me!"

Of course she could have run into the house: but in times of great danger one can not see everything—not even a house. In spite of her terrible plight—"alone and unprotected"—*Gilda* finds the situation not unbearable, especially when she discovers the intruder to be her handsome stranger: the delightful disturber of her matinal devotions.

"'Tis thou! What brought thee here?"

We suspect that she recognized him from the first, but young girls never miss a chance to play the hapless heroine.

PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR GEORG

GALLI-CURCI AS "GILDA" IN "RIGOLETTO"

"Begone from me!" This is genuine heroism, I assure you, for it is the last thing in the world *Gilda* wishes to happen. It is very poor acting, however; she sings the words in the mildest kind of tones: neither the orchestra nor the *Duke* pay the least attention to them. He goes on singing of love, and as for *Gilda*—she just goes on listening, and you really can't blame her now for the all-wise orchestra has resumed that delirious waltz-rhythm, and there is nothing hesitant or uncertain about the *Duke's* love-song. So judge not too harshly this close-guarded child of the *Jester* who suddenly finds all her dreams not only realized but added unto. In that humble garden, now enchanted, she hears sweet age-old words addressed her by a veritable cavalier in velvet cloak and plumed hat. Truly all the Fates and Verdi, Victor Hugo, too, and a high-priced tenor voice—to say nothing of the moon—have combined to charm her into ecstacy. Do not blame her for believing all she hears, for giving her heart wholly and singing with him—outdoing him in a nightingale glory of tonal rapture. Don't blame her: blame Verdi. Words alone she might have withstood, but combined with such music! As well expect a bark canoe to turn of itself and float upstream as expect a girl's heart to turn adamant to the transporting power of that melody.

When the song and final duet are hushed into silence, the lovers still murmur softly the eternal sweet nothings of love. Eternal these are, in more senses than one, to the *Duke* who counts that day lost that does not hear them uttered by his facile lips into some fair ear. But *Gilda* never doubts that she "alone enthralls him": he has told her so. She asks his name. He gives her the first one he can think of, which chances to be "Walter

Maldé." No great splendor nor originality to this, but *Gilda* finds it all but sublime.

Outside the garden wall we now see two cloaked figures, stealthily approaching: they are *Borso* and *Count Ceprano.* There is a deep plot abrew. We see *Borso* designate the gate and wall of the garden: "Here it is," he announces. He knows it as the place of *Rigoletto's* secret rendezvous: but neither *Borso* nor any other courtier, save the *Duke,* knows as yet that the incognita who receives *Rigoletto's* nightly visits is his own daughter.

Borso and *Ceprano,* after making sure of the location, go off-stage again as cautiously as they entered. But *Giovanna,* alert enough in guarding her charge from all save the *Duke*—hears the outsiders and she now rushes upon the lovers giving the alarm. *Gilda* is quickly frightened, fearing it may be her father returned.

She joins *Giovanna* in urging her visitor to go. He accedes, but—this being a perfectly normal Grand Opera of the old school—he pauses to sing with her, fortissimo, vivacissimo and real agitato, again and again. "We part now! We part now! Farewell!" They keep this up energetically through four pages, and finally tear themselves asunder on a vociferous high B. The *Duke* rushes out, guided by *Giovanna,* through the house instead of risking the garden gate.

So *Gilda* is left alone—yet not alone, for love is still with her. The familiar garden and friendly flowers surround her—yet the world is all new: only the moon which in truth sails on unheeding and with heartless haste, only the moon, seems abiding and unmoved. Enwrapt in its glory, a-tremble with joy, *Gilda* repeats aloud the dear name—the "Caro Nome"—Walter Maldé. The

music of the orchestra is drenched and dripping with moonlight: the instruments barely breathe: only the flute—half awake—tip-toes a gleaming pathway in soft staccatos from earth to heaven, from tones low down to highest treble. Again and again we dreamily follow that dim upward way of the flute, faint and ethereal, all dolce and morendo. Then a pause, a deep breath, a shift of the harmony, and a new key-world breaks upon us: a new song. How often in the Book of Books that term is used, proclaimed as a power, as a thing of mystery—a new song! This great song of *Gilda's* is ever new: it is the "Caro Nome."

We are inclined to associate, musically, a languid legato with memories of love: but not so in this New Song. Almost staccato is *Gilda's* shy, half-frightened admission to herself of the great love she feels: a maidenly semi-voce clings to the whole aria. But altho subdued in point of tone-volume, *Gilda's* love inspires her to prodigies of achievement in the way of colorature. Trills and grace-notes bespangle this song, like dewdrops in the moonlight. There are daring portamentos bridging chasm-like intervals that only a sleep-walker, a love-maddened girl, or a Galli-Curci should attempt.

At last fair *Gilda,* white-robed and a-dream, remembers time and place, and bethinks her to light a candle. Still singing softly and clinging fondly to the "Caro Nome," she slowly mounts the garden stairway to a terrace above and enters her room. A last, lingering high note is sung off-stage, while the candle's gleam plainly indicates, to all whom it may concern, the location of her sleeping-chamber.

A vital matter this is to the group of plotters now outside the garden wall who have met together, under

Ceprano's guidance, during the finale of *Gilda's* song.

There is conspiracy-music now in the orchestra: you can always recognize this—stealthy chords, a nervous rhythm, and sudden contrasts of forte and pianissimo.

The courtiers, turned jesters, have come to steal *Rigoletto's* supposed inamorata. It is a joke of their own devising: the *Duke* knows nothing of it. Indeed their purpose is not merely to outwit *Rigoletto,* but to surprize the *Duke* as well: they intend taking *Gilda* to the palace.

But the conspirators are somewhat disconcerted when presently *Rigoletto,* prompted by a father's fears and premonitions, unexpectedly returns to keep guard at *Gilda's* gate. While feeling his way about, he accidentally bumps into *Borso*—whereupon he asks belligerently: "Who are you?"

This bit of by-play is painstakingly devised by the librettist to indicate how extremely dark the street is—a matter which must somehow be made clear as the audience would otherwise be in darkness, metaphorically—since the stage-lighting is of course sufficient to see all the action.

The meeting with *Rigoletto* is upsetting to their plans, but luckily *Marullo* has an inspiration. He tells *Rigoletto* they have come to steal *Ceprano's* wife. The *Jester* not wholly convinced, inquires:

"How will you enter his palace?"

Marullo, a Machiavellian genius, asks *Ceprano,* in a quick aside, for his key. This is handed to *Rigoletto* who, feeling the Ceprano crest upon it, is convinced and relieved, until he thinks to ask why they are on the wrong side of the street—the Ceprano palace is opposite. *Marullo,* still the arch-plotter, says they are just ready

to cross over: everything is arranged, but he, *Rigoletto,* must wear a mask like the rest of them. *Marullo* ties a handkerchief over the *Jester's* face, making it thick and firm over his eyes and ears, and at the same time deftly turning him around so that he no longer knows which side of the street he is on. They then induce him to hold a ladder placed, as he supposes, beneath the *Countess Ceprano's* window. Some of them mount the ladder, promising soon to return with the lady.

The out-witted *Jester* little dreams they are breaking into his own home, by climbing over the garden wall, and then opening the gate from the inside. The invaders hurry across the terrace into *Gilda's* room. They presently bear her out, bound and blindfolded, and carry her through the gate into the street and hence away—leaving *Rigoletto* still holding the ladder and puzzled at their long delay.

This being a regulation Grand Opera, and the moment one of tensity and caution, there must needs be at this point a pause in the action to allow for a chorus: a pianissimo but vigorous composition, six pages long, beginning, "Zitti! Zitti!" If you don't know what "Zitti" means you are not a faithful Grand-Opera follower. It means "Hush! Hush!" and is usually followed by the words: "Let no one hear us."

This is sung by the group of conspirators who stand guard in the street while their comrades have entered to capture *Gilda.* When these emerge with their victim the entire group scurries away, unaware that a designing Providence in the form of Victor Hugo has allowed *Gilda's* scarf to slip from her and be left lying at the gate.

The music now mounts to fortissimo. *Rigoletto* at last suspicious, tears the bandage from his eyes, sees the

open garden, rushes up to *Gilda's* room—out again, finds her scarf, tries to call for help—but is voiceless and all a-tremble. He falls to the ground unable to co-ordinate thought and speech beyond the pitiful memory of that curse: "A father cursed me!"

The third act brings us back to the palace—the next morning.

The music is agitato: so is the *Duke,* who enters alone. The matter of his agitation is neither national nor political: he is troubled about *Gilda:* not with qualms of conscience but with fear that he has lost her. We learn that, after leaving her so hastily the night before, he returned later but received no answer to his knock from the well-paid *Giovanna.* All was dark and deserted. He now fears that the sounds they heard at the gate—and which hastened his departure—held some evil import for *Gilda.* The kidnapping of fair maidens was a common sport in those days.

"Where have they borne her? My fairest angel!"—he cries in chagrin: as the archdemon perhaps does when a soul is saved. So successfully can sin metamorphose the conscience it will eventually give comfort and applause when it should be upbraiding. By recognizing this fact we are enabled to understand the ensuing "adagio cantabile" sweetly sung by the *Duke.* He believes he truly loves the fair *Gilda:* he fears she is weeping now, and terrified. He tells himself he would give his life's blood to rescue her. He feels real noble and sentimental, and sings to himself—and to the applause of his comfortable conscience—the tenderest sort of a love-song: all this in plain sight of the fine portrait of his wife, the *Duchess,* which hangs on the wall for the audience to see. The poor *Duke* is almost weeping

with pity for himself at having lost the *Jester's* lovely daughter.

While in the midst of his dolcissimo sorrows, the whole group of courtiers hurry in, athrill and elated with the news of their adventure; their joke on the *Jester;* their capture of "his sweetheart," and his own blindfolded participation in it all. They do not know that she is his daughter, nor does the *Duke* at once perceive that the "sweetheart" they refer to, and his loved *Gilda* are the same. Good-humoredly he listens to the animated telling of their piquante escapade. It is all in Verdi's finest vein of chorus tunefulness: with abrupt fortissimos and a swinging, pounding rhythm.

As the merry tale goes on the *Duke* discerns, from their description of the house and its location, that they were the marauders heard at the gate when he was ingloriously obliged to flee: his mourned-for *Gilda* is the maid they have captured. Now, indeed, his interest is keen.

"Where have you taken her?" he eagerly asks.

"We brought her here," they reply unabashed.

We infer the proceeding is by no means unusual: but the *Duke's* manner, it seems, somewhat varies from his custom. He turns away from them all to hide his relief and joy—and to sing another ebullient love-song. This also is an aside—three full pages—sung to himself, to the audience and to his still applauding conscience. The courtiers, in the meantime, chorus an aside of their own; they are surprized at the Duke's evident emotion.

After several fine climaxes with exultant high notes, the *Duke* hastens out through a door at the back, evidently knowing well in which room to seek the captured maid.

There now follows a scene that is, perhaps, the greatest ever composed for barytone. It demands both great singing and great acting.

We hear a sharp change in the music: above harmonies of doleful minor, there plays an impish, half-hearted little theme plainly meaning to be merry but too weighted by the undertone of minor to succeed. We hear *Rigoletto* off-stage singing a ghastly "la-la" to the mock-merry theme. He comes at the appointed hour of duty—in his motley and fool's-cap—to fulfill his rôle of fun-maker in the hated halls of his profligate master. It is the saddest "la-la," the hollowest gay tune, the pen of composer ever dotted down, or the voice of man ever pretended to sing.

Verdi's muse wields a flaming sword in this scene. Not with pen but with forks of fire flashed across the sky one imagines this scene to have been first conceived.

Rigoletto enters still sounding his fool-song, and still shaking his fool's bells in a skeleton-like jingle. He faces the courtiers with an attempt at indifference: he even dances a few steps, but his feet are lead, his eyes all tears, and his voice little more than a sob.

The courtiers greet him with jeering pleasantry. "What news this morning, *Rigoletto?*"

He tries to answer with his wonted insolence: "None; save that you all are more tedious than usual. 'Twas a clever joke you played last night."

He resumes his pitiful pretense of a song, and his halting *pas-seul:* spying everywhere as he does so, listening keenly, and hoping against hope for some clue or whisper that will enlighten him as to *Gilda's* whereabouts. No use questioning the callous courtiers: their hard, white smiles, like gleaming icicles, freeze the very

air about him. But he does find voice to ask with seeming casualness: "Is the Duke still sleeping?"

"Yes, still sleeping," they answer with true diabolism.

But the devil gets a jolt just now, for a page from the *Duchess* enters requesting for her Highness an interview with the *Duke.*

The *Duchess,* like the court fool, receives only lies from her husband's followers: the page, too, is told the *Duke* sleeps. But even the youngest page may know more than my lord's lady. This page, it chances, had already this very morning met the *Duke* in the corridor —and he says so.

"He has gone hunting," they now announce lightly.

"Impossible!" cries the page, a stubborn little piece, out of place it would seem in a palace. "Without escort, and at this hour! Impossible!"

Rigoletto, listening horrified, recognizes only too well the subterfuges, the lies, he himself more than once has used in concealing his master's misdemeanors. Maddened to despair he suddenly cries out: "She is here!— the maid you stole last night from my house. Here! —in that room—with the Duke!"

They still fling at him ghoulish jeers. "You must find you another sweetheart."

He does not even hear them: in frenzied fear he pleads and entreats with a mighty sob, a crashing cry that soars and sinks.

"My daughter! Give me back my daughter!"

They echo this word in amaze, and are indeed momentarily dismayed. But none of them forgets the game, or their precious prestige at court. When *Rigoletto* rushes madly at the door to break in, they one and all stand guard to prevent him. He turns on them, denounces

and curses them, as the old man *Monterone* had done in the first act. *Rigoletto,* too, is an old man: his fool's cap has fallen off and we see his gray head.

"Vile rabble! Detested race of curs!" his batterment of flung words is accompanied by mounting music in the orchestra that verily storms with piled up thunder the iron gates of perdition.

Rigoletto again rushes at the barred door, struggles single-handed with the entire group of grinning sycophants who again effectually prevent him from breaking through. Bound with misery, realizing the futility of his efforts—their banded determination against him—he again pleads and prays to them to save his daughter: appeals to them singly—to *Marullo,* to *Borso,* then to all of them. Oh, it is a mighty prayer for pity—a final, ultimate prayer: "My child, my *Gilda!* Give her again to me!" The melody, so tearfully sung by *Rigoletto,* is duplicated by the mellow-toned oboe, a third beneath the voice-part supporting, as it were, like a friend at court, this last frail effort of the pleader. Together they cry out their prayer in broad rhythmic phrases.

The music of moaning agony is most often in the minor—it has already been used effectively in this scene—but Verdi daringly and impressively, at the most poignant climax of grief, lets the harmonies in utmost pianissimo droop and swoon into the major. The very firmness and decisiveness of this mode imparts an absolute hopelessness that rends the heart.

As one who suddenly sees the whole universe as naught but a monstrous vacuum, *Rigoletto* gives one last cry to the unpitying emptiness about him: *"Gilda!* my *Gilda!"* His voice rings out unaccompanied save by the breaking surge of his own sobs.

But in God's own way such prayers are answered, and the wise creator of tales follows the supreme Creator's laws. *Gilda* in the nearby room hears her father's last reckless outcry. She answers him, and rushes to him: flings wide the door, and falls into his arms, weeping, bowed, dishonored. At first, the distracted *Rigoletto* is so overjoyed at sight of her he believes it all was a jest, that the courtiers were merely fooling him—hiding her just to alarm him. But *Gilda's* bowed head and terrified confession in reply to his questions, causes him to reel in horror. The music dissolves into a ghastly monotone —the same deadly tone that sounded *Monterone's* curse.

In that same reiterated tone, dull and chalk-like, *Rigoletto* asks—nay—commands the courtiers to leave him: even the *Duke* must not enter. "Tell him, I forbid him!" A pitiful, unplanned, magnificent gesture, this, magnificent as the stillness of death.

The power of it is felt: the courtiers retire and the gray-haired *Jester* is left alone with his daughter.

He bids her tell him all. This she does, more or less. But Verdi enwraps the sordid tale in such a wealth of endearing melody that we luckily lose sight of its grossness. You may be sure, she strongly emphasizes, with a splendor of high notes and colorature, her terror and helplessness when bound and carried from home. You do not wonder at *Rigoletto* responding with pity and comfort.

"Weep here on my heart," he sings: but he it is who does most of the weeping: this we somehow surmize from the music. Never has the love of a father been more superbly portrayed in song than Verdi has done in this opera. In the present duet *Gilda's* voice sings sweet, gasping phrases that harmonize with, but only touch

lightly, the deep, strong, tender theme of the broken-hearted *Jester.*

An interlude now occurs back-stage. Ominous drum-notes sound as the old man, *Monterone*—lately sentenced to death for his rash vituperative attack upon the *Duke* —is seen, being led to his cell by halberdiers. As he passes by the royal apartment, he pauses at sight of the *Duke's* portrait—pauses to hurl once again his thundering malediction upon the profligate ruler, the vile seducer —"still unavenged!—still unavenged!"

The white-haired nobleman, doomed but unbending passes on, but his words have aroused *Rigoletto.* He, too, now addresses the portrait in fiery tones and, incidentally, in throbbing melody. He vows that the heartless fiend shall yet feel a father's wrath. *Gilda,* tho secretly alarmed at this fierce uprising, tries to join in his splendid fury: but in her heart of hearts she well knows "there is naught of anger"—this much she admits to herself. In plain, frank English, be it stated, this ruined lady still loves her betrayer. But after all she is a young thing—this unguarded heroine of Hugo's tale—so let us not be over-harsh: she pays later on—poor girl. For the present her anguish, or rather, her father's anguish, inspires a duet whose leaping melody rings out with a vigor as unbounded as the faith that moves mountains. The hobbling *Jester* stands suddenly a giant: he treads the earth in seven-league boots with the mighty stride of a fierce resolve. He shouts the song of a Hercules, and we know that naught can stay him. All the Fates and Furies have fired him: he is Nemesis let loose with the doom of destiny clutched in his hand.

The last act soon discloses the scheme of *Rigoletto's* revenge. We see a setting somewhat similar to the one

in the second act. It is again late at night, but the wall-enclosed cottage in this instance is situated on a lonely roadway outside of the town. In this cottage-garden, or courtyard, there is also—as in the other scene—a stairway leading to a sleeping-room above. But this whole establishment is decrepit and half in ruins. However, it serves as an inn—an evil-looking one—but a table and chairs in the garden, and the bedroom above, give excuse for the shabby sign that swings at the gate. The owner of this so-called inn is none other than the affable murderer whom we saw soliciting trade in the second act. He is not seeking trade to-night: he has presumably enough work on hand. Just now he is resting at home: he is seated at the table polishing a belt by way of pastime. His name is *Sparafucile.*

As the curtain rises we see on the roadway, outside the wall, *Rigoletto* and *Gilda* in agitated discussion, tho they "parlando" their words in hushed recitative. *Rigoletto's* revenge is well-planned: the only difficulty he has encountered is *Gilda's* abiding love for her betrayer. He has set the plot going: has sought out *Sparafucile* at his accustomed corner, and has enabled the outlaw's handsome sister to catch the eye of the vagrant, incognito *Duke.* All this he has done, and the sister—knowing well her part—has induced the *Duke* to meet her this night at the secluded inn. They are waiting for him now.

All is well, save that *Rigoletto,* before the deed is done, wishes to disillusion his hapless daughter. For this purpose he has dragged *Gilda* here to-night. Through a crevice in the wall she shall see for herself how her fickle lover disports himself. This done—it is his plan to have *Gilda,* garbed as a boy, haste away with

him to Verona, before the *Duke's* death is discovered.

Such are his plans, poor Fool, but they all go awry as most plans do, when vengeance alone devises them.

Again and again, *Rigoletto* asks *Gilda,* whether she still holds her lover dear: and always she answers, "Yes." "Tho you should see with your own eyes his worthlessness, would there still be love in your heart?" She falters a little, but again answers, "Yes, I think so." This is discouraging but, *Rigoletto* still hopes, still hopes to wrench from her heart this sadly misplaced love.

While *Gilda* and her father have been talking outside, the *Duke,* disguised as a soldier, enters the inn, seats himself at the table and orders wine. *Sparafucile* goes out to fetch it. The *Duke* glances about for the winsome Delilah of this rendezvous: he waits a moment and then, seeing no one, he sings a song to pass the time.

Trust *Gilda,* the listening girl outside, to recognize that voice! She cringes at the uncurbed words of his tap-room ditty, but that voice, that voice!—her heart leaps at the sound of it—she loves him—God pity her! You can't blame her much when you hear that song, for it is the immortal, bubbling, sparkling, ever-new "La Donna é Mobile": eternally sung, played, whistled, string-scraped, organ-ground, banjo-plucked, fluted, oboed, xylophoned, saxophoned, jazzed—and still emerging light as air and merry-hearted, still imparting tingle and thrill whenever and wherever met with.

When the *Duke's* song is ended the gay bella-donna who had occasioned his presence here, comes lustily down the stairs to greet him. Poor *Gilda* quivers indeed at sight of the handsome, gypsy-clad wench: she shivers, heart-sick, when the *Duke* extends to this slum of the streets, gallant words and caresses.

In the meantime, *Sparafucile,* leaving the two within the enclosure, has come out to speak with *Rigoletto.* He does not see *Gilda* standing by the darkened wall, peering through that convenient crevice, nor does she hear what he says to her father. Sudden deafness and blindness, temporary, timely, and unexplained are of frequent occurrence in Grand Opera.

Sparafucile asks *Rigoletto* whether the deed shall be done now! In other words, is the money ready? Before the flash of steel, a glimpse of gold is needed. *Rigoletto* answers, "Not yet. Return again soon." He wishes *Gilda* to see still more—to watch that infamous pair till her eyes are ablaze with fury, and her love flames into hate. This he hopes for, not alone for her own good, but also by way of winning her applause instead of censure for the vengeance he is about to wreak. Poor Fool! Poor Fool! How little he knows of the human heart, of a woman's heart, or for that matter—of his own subconscious reasoning.

Sparafucile goes off-stage toward the river to wait, thus leaving *Gilda* and *Rigoletto* in the roadway, and *Maddalena* and the *Duke* within the courtyard. *Gilda* ever and again peers through the creviced wall watching the *Duke's* love-making and *Maddalena's* bold coquetry. *Rigoletto,* close by, urges *Gilda* to cease her weeping, forget the scoundrel and learn to hate him.

Thus they act, and thus they speak—all of which is of no importance whatever: only the music—the harmony wrought from their diverse emotions—only this is what counts and is remembered. Verdi, the creator of this mimic universe, has here most vividly pointed the moral that all things work together for good—at least for good as applied to music. When he finished it

he must have felt, in finite fashion, as the First Great Harmonizer felt when his work was done and He saw that all was good: this much of God's own joy it is the privilege of every honest workman to experience.

You are listening now to the "Rigoletto Quartet," a masterpiece only paralleled in popularity by the famed "Lucia Sextette."

The quartet in one way surpasses its rival, in that the music of the four voices, gives individual and adequate expression to the feelings of each participant. There is gasping anguish in *Gilda's* heart-broken realization of her lover's perfidy, rollicking comedy in *Maddalena's* mock repulse of her visitor's advances, a winning love-song on the *Duke's* part, while *Rigoletto* throughout sings steadily of revenge. The music itself, not merely the words, expresses by varying rhythm and theme these strongly conflicting emotions. It abounds in good counterpoint, the genuine article, but is never a bit involved. You, who run at the very mention of classical music, are swallowing whole gulps of it when you hear this quartet —you swallow it right down and never know it. You only know you are hearing the most rousing, grandiose, tuneful and tender, heart-tearing piece of four-part singing you have ever heard, or will hear—with great luscious orchestra harmonies weaving their way underneath.

So much for the hackneyed but imperishable "Rigoletto Quartet."

When it ends, *Rigoletto* in unaccompanied recitative hastily bids *Gilda* rush home, don her doublet and hose, and flee on horse, as they have planned, to nearby Verona where he will meet her. This plan does not greatly interest *Gilda*—she is too heart-broken—but she goes as commanded.

Rigoletto then summons *Sparafucile* from behind the house, and the transaction of "half-down" is attended to. *Rigoletto* promises to return at midnight with the other half. *Sparafucile* deftly suggests he need not be so prompt, all will be well, he himself will throw the body into the river. But the *Jester* is too shrewd for this: he wishes personally to attend to that part. Caution and fear of betrayal—the eternal vanguard and rear-guard of homicide—have already clutched upon him. And probably he is already enduring that endless dialog that ensues on the heels of crime.

"Am I really a murderer?"

"No, of course not. There was this or that mitigating, or imperative motive or circumstance."

Thus, they argue within themselves, back and forth, to the end of days.

Rigoletto wields no weapon, he does not kill, hence—in a sense—he is no murderer. To make this evidence a little more clear to himself, he goes out of sight, out of hearing until midnight.

Sparafucile, his money in his purse, re-enters the courtyard.

And now darkness falls over the land: I mean darkness of mood and of music. A fling of sheet lightning torments the sky, but far more vivid is the sound of it in the orchestra—a lone flash of flute arpeggioed prestissimo.

Sparafucile speaks of an approaching storm. The *Duke* makes light of it—does not care—cares for nothing just now but the brazen, black-eyed *Maddalena.* He teasingly seizes her: she escapes him—to the tune of his recent love-song: just a touch of it tossed off by the clarionet.

The music from now on is fragmentary, restless, a troubled spirit broods over all: again there sounds the gleaming flute as the lightning glows. Follows a pianissimo play of distant thunder—and then truly weird and original on Verdi's part—there is a gruesome humming of hidden voices (the chorus back-stage) in creepy chromatics that add a shivery tone-color to the dire doings now under way. There are long pauses in the orchestra while those on the stage utter deadly commonplaces as we do in real life to conceal our motives and meanings.

Sparafucile again warns of the storm and advises the *Duke* to stay over night. *Maddalena,* in an aside, urges him to go. The *Duke,* all unheeding, flings her an aside of different purport. But the clarionet spies upon him and exposes his meaning: it impishly clarions a hint of his love-song.

Maddalena is troubled: she finds herself recoiling at the thought of his doom. Again those hidden voices—Fate speaking—again the trickle of lightning on the flute —and again silence among the watching instruments of the orchestra—that never-sleeping conscience of Grand Opera, following all, revealing all, and quick to forewarn if we but listen and heed.

Sparafucile leads the *Duke* to the rickety stairs and up to the couch in the loggia. Left alone up there, the *Duke* smiles at the primitive accommodations, but cares not: he cares only for wine and for the "donnas" who are "mobile." He sings the song softly, as he closes the shutters of his retreat and then lays himself down for the "brief hour" he has mentioned in an aside to *Maddalena.*

Talk of diversity in motives and music, there was never

a scene in Grand Opera that had more of it. The lilting Wine, Woman and Love song is barely ended when *Maddalena,* in the courtyard below, begs her brother not to kill this handsome stranger. And at the same time *Gilda* returns fearsomely, but regardless of her father's orders. Love and curiosity have brought her back to watch again through that crevice in the wall. She has obeyed her father partly, however: she did go home and put on the doublet and hose disguise: it was quick dressing but love and jealousy, we must assume, have endowed her with superhuman celerity.

Anyway, back she comes, all alone, and just in time to overhear the discussion between *Maddalena* and her brother. *Sparafucile* refuses to draw back from the bargain: he wants the rest of the money. *Maddalena* suggests that he let the *Hunchback* hand over the money and then kill him instead of the fine gentleman upstairs. But *Sparafucile* is a man of principle: he refuses to stoop to such a deed: kill his employer!—never!

All this *Gilda* hears while the musical atmosphere still is flecked with silence—hidden voices—and recurring glints of flute-play and rumble of deadened drums. After much persuasion *Maddalena* induces her brother to consent to one alternative: the orchestra firmly accompanies him in this brilliant blood-curdling proposal. If some other stranger should arrive at the inn before the appointed hour *Sparafucile* is willing to kill him instead of the sweet-voiced singer of love-songs now asleep in the loggia. There is slight chance of any stranger appearing in such a storm, but beyond this dubious concession *Sparafucile* will not be moved: he stubbornly works at a sack he is mending—a sack in which to carry out the body of whoever it may be he this night kills.

The storm still rages, the stage darkens, the music thunders and crashes, harrowing the hearer with its cumulation of groaning chorus and its murderous theme in octaves, cold and hard, as pointed stilettos.

There is no delay now in the awfulness that follows. To save her father as well as her lover and also—it may be—to escape from her own frenzied heart-ache *Gilda* now resolutely knocks at the gate.

The "stranger" has appeared!

Sparafucile, with drawn dagger stands back of the door, as *Maddalena* opens.

Then utter blackness on the stage. We are spared the hideous sight, but we hear it all in the music—a riven driven plunge of chords and broken octaves, an ensemble of troubled tremolos, piercing staccatos like flung knives —and still that steady drone of muffled voices, wailing spirits of the air, witches howling, shrieking a snarl of chromatics, and then at last as the rain and storm ceases, slowly dies down—then at last in the darkness and silence, we hear the clock strike twelve.

Rigoletto, prompt to the minute, waits outside. *Sparafucile,* equally prompt, opens the gate, mutely receives his pay, and then drags out and hands over to *Rigoletto*—the filled sack. He loses no time in disappearing, leaving the hunchback to the pleasant task of tumbling the sack into the river. In real life, he probably would do this at once with never a moment wasted. But in Grand Opera one pauses to sing forth one's triumphant joy when a real revenge has been achieved. *Rigoletto* does this in tempered recitative: his feelings are not wholly exuberant, but his tones unmistakably declare that the torment of hate is abated.

He is about to drag off the gruesome bundle—when

a monstrous thing happens. The *Duke's* voice is heard singing in the distance! The storm having ceased, he, the *Duke,* has risen from his siesta and gone—possibly urged away by *Maddalena.* He still sings of the "Donna" of fickle fancy.

Rigoletto knows the song and the voice: how often he has heard both at this hour of illicit escapades. The song is sung to the end, *Rigoletto* listening paralyzed, overwhelmed, insane with a growing horror. What does the hulking bag contain? What man has been killed in the *Duke's* place?

Laughed at all his life—can it be that even now the tragedy he planned has all been turned to mockery?

With frenzied terror he wrenches open the bag—sees a white staring face—his daughter!

Here the story ends, and the opera should end, but Grand Operas will be Grand Operas. *Gilda* is not quite dead! She comes to life enough to say "Father!" and a moment later she finds breath enough to sing with him a "grand finale" duet (of course, she still lies in the bag), it is all about heaven, and seeing her mother, etc. This finally dies down—and so does she—completely this time. Then again there is the proper downpour of tragic chords in the orchestra, as *Rigoletto,* realizing all, cries out again the echoing monotone of the opera: "That curse! The father's curse is upon me!"

With this *Rigoletto* falls down in a faint. The curtain falls too, and the audience is usually half-way down the aisle, for the hour is late: this opera is ten minutes—ten absurd minutes—longer than it should be.

CHAPTER III

JERITZA, A STAR OF THE EAST

WHERE is Moravia? Do you know? I did not—beyond a dim familiarity to the sound that somehow connected up with the "Prisoner of Zenda" and the seething Balkans. But I know now: it is where Madame Jeritza was born.

If one could find the country, one might also find the little city of Brünn where she first saw the sunshine and, presumably, heard singing: she calls her whole life one of "Sunlight and Song"—has given that title to her autobiography. But Moravia is now a part of Czecho-Slovakia, a name that promptly dazzles and diverts from further pursuit. Say "Czecho-Slovakia" to the average American and you will see a wide-eyed baby-stare of geographical innocence: a stare wholly absorbed by a confused mental vision of astounding needlework, bizarre colors, and the audacious splendor of the name itself.

There is something of that same audacious splendor in Madame Jeritza's appearance and performance when on the stage. It was three years ago that she flamed into prominence here and captured newspaper headlines like a Balkan uprising. She made her début at the Metropolitan in an astonishing new opera (new to America) that one would think had been written especially for her.

The plot largely hinges upon—hangs upon—a dead woman's hair. The hero, who has treasured his first wife's luxuriant tresses, uses them as a rope to strangle his second wife—Jeritza. Had there been a third wife

—well—the audience could not fail to note that she might easily have been lassoed as well as strangled by the marvelous blonde hair of her predecessor, had this Bluebeard hero added it to his collection.

Jeritza is tall, and she treads the earth like a Greek goddess. Her voice matches her hair and her figure: it is golden, opulent, astonishing. Yes—Czecho-Slovakia is nothing if not astonishing.

"Die Todte Stadt" is the name of that first opera we heard her in: it reeks and moans with death, horror, and despair: Moravia—her homeland—may, too, just now be something of a Todte Stadt—but there is nothing dead about Jeritza. She is all vibrant energy on the stage—a force, and a vision. Her dramatic effects are all fearless, sharply outlined, and original: she deals in strong colors. A veritable breeze from the Balkans, she surcharged the Metropolitan from pit to dome with excitement. During that memorable first season the house was sold out in three days whenever her name was announced.

To get to see her at the Metropolitan required hustle and cash—but to see her in private required prayer, patience, pen-work, some telephoning, several telegrams —and then more prayer. At last through a system of relays from her secretary to my publishers and from them to me—I was advised to call on "Monday at 2." Mindful of the deference due to a high Eastern potentate, I presented myself at the outer portals of the St. Regis Hotel on Monday at 1:45. During the intervening minutes I waited in the foyer between the two restaurants. All was stately and quiet—even within the tall dining-rooms.

I presently noted a sudden excitement among the

waiters, a hurrying back and forth through the foyer in response to imperious signals from the dress-coated overlord. I surely heard whispered mention of "Jeritza," and then saw added eddies of excitement among the retainers.

What manner of August Personage was this, I thought, that all of St. Regis should tip-toe and flutter when she chanced to enter the dining-room—condescended to eat! My republican blood was rebelling. I was losing interest in Madame Jeritza upon realizing that a further wait would probably be requested of me since she had but just now commenced luncheon.

Promptly at two, I handed in my card at the desk. The clerk rang Madame's room-number. There was no answer. My consternation over the fact that her apartment was vacant—that it held no imperial retinue, as I had imagined, almost superseded my indignation over the fact that my 2 o'clock appointment was ignored. I then suggested the dining-room, but was told she seldom eats there. Had I then been mistaken about the whispered agitation among those waiters? By persistent insistence I induced them to send in a boy with my card. But I was furious and ready to fly without waiting for his return. There was war in my heart. Moravia was to me just then an exceedingly Todte Stadt—Czecho-Slovakia, too, was wiped off the map—the whole cubistic bunch of them.

But right now a voice from above (I was seated for the moment) a voice strangely mellow and beneficent was sounded in my ear with something of the effect of a herald angel singing Peace on Earth. "Oh, Madame, I am sorry—what shall I do?" It was Jeritza herself, tall, blonde, radiant and a bit out of breath.

Maria Jeritza

Czecho-Slovakia was restored to the map! The moment I laid eyes on that smiling but earnest, child-like—yes, child-like—face, I loved Jeritza—just loved her, and was ready to do anything for her. She wore a black tailored suit and a black hat, with no furbelows or jewels in view. I forced myself to note this—it was an effort—for her halo of hair and her bright smile so captured me that I saw her all garbed in glory and gold.

She was still asking earnestly—her English a bit hesitant: "What shall I do? It was yesterday I expected you." Ah!—that explained it—the relay of wires had twisted her "Sunday" to "Monday."

"And to-day," she went on, "I am having a friend with me to lunch, and after that I take a lesson. It seems terrible to ask you to come again, or to wait several hours."

"I will come whenever you tell me to, whenever I may see Madame Jeritza alone."

"Could you come back to-morrow at 2:30?"

"I could and I would—even tho the hour named had been midnight or 2:30 A.M. Any time, any place, I would now have come—not merely for the sake of again meeting this genial song-lady, all simplicity in private, however sumptuous in public, but because I was now all curiosity on another quest—all keen and a-quiver to know why, and what about, and from whom she was *taking a lesson!* Prima donnas, I know, are "coached" in their rôles, but never yet have I heard one confess to taking "lessons." There is thrilling naïveté in that phrase.

Jeritza is imperial on the stage, but at home—let me say it again—she is sweetly, adorably, child-like.

So at 2:30 on the next day I was again a supplicant

at my St. Regis shrine. This time I was uplifted at once—fourteen stories.

"To the right, please, and then 'round the corner"—was the direction I received from the smiling cherub who had elevated me.

I passed on and on, through the corridors of Time, so it seemed, till at last I reached the designated corner and here—behold—my way was barred! No flaming sword flashed before me, but I did see a somewhat flaming signal: in letters of red wherever I looked I saw the initials "M. P. J." They flashed out at me from a black background: the ebony sides of huge, stout wardrobe trunks, piled up in rows, all packed, locked and ready for shipping—twelve of them! I counted carefully as I maneuvered my way around them. There were satchels, too, and hat trunks. Who packed them all? A Dantesque vision of the confusion entailed in the planning and packing of so many trunks gave a sensible jerk to my soaring spirit: I had mounted high—but this was not Heaven.

A moment later I rang a bell, and a moment later I was talking to Her—yes—and loving her again as I had the day before. But I did not forget what I had come for! After shaking hands with the Dawn (she is Aurora herself) and after making a few proper remarks about the weather—and remembering, when I sat down, not to sit on the sofa (for in Europe, only Kings, Queens, and Mothers-in-law may presume to use the sofa), I splashed right in with my burning question, regardless of proprieties, split infinitives, or mixed metaphors:

"Please, Madame, tell me about that lesson you had yesterday. Do you really take lessons? It seems so wonderful of you to still take lessons."

"Why, of course, I take lessons. I have English lessons three times a week, and Ensemble lessons from Mr. Polacco, and singing lessons from Madame Sembrich."

There you have it boys, girls and students the world over: ponder that sentence well—copy it out, hang it over your desk. Always studying, always striving to advance further, always willing to learn from others—herein lies the secret—not only of achieving success, but of *retaining it,* which is harder by far than the first climb

I believe, of the three, those English lessons astonished me the most. Madame Jeritza has been here three seasons and really knows the language quite well: she understands perfectly, has a bit of an accent that you wouldn't like her to lose, and she seldom hesitates for a word. One might think, since she is to be here next season and the next, she could afford to let English just soak in—learn itself. But no, whatever Jeritza learns, she learns thoroughly. She believes, too, that one's brain is best developed and kept alert by continuous study, actual lesson-book study. Ah! but they are conquerors!—these super-artists in Grand Opera: they domineer and command by the sheer right and force that results from first commanding themselves. In spite of long hours in public performances, and still longer hours at rehearsals, in spite of time given to costumes, to their fitting and designing, in spite of time spent in memorizing new rôles and keeping letter-perfect in old ones; time reserved, too, for needed rest, also for the hairdresser and the general upkeep of beauty—so essential to operatic success—time too absorbed in travel, in the planning of schedules and engagements, in spite of all this the resolute Jeritza so rules her life that she still can give regular

time to the study of English—as she has done in the past to French and Italian. I doff my hat and make my bow to such persistent determination as this *after one already has attained to the ultimate:* to fill the Metropolitan night after night is the ultimate altitude of success a singing star can achieve.

The "ensemble" lessons are imperative and understandable. However gloriously you may sing your own part, if you are unacquainted with—and do not conform to—the varying tempos, interpretation, and pauses of the orchestra, you will find a tower of Babel tumbling upon your guilty head. Signor Polacco is one of the Metropolitan's orchestra conductors.

That Jeritza, too, takes lessons of Madame Sembrich is no occasion for surprize: a woman who has the brain-power that lifts her to such eminence must for the same reason be wise enough to appreciate the privilege of receiving instruction from the world's Super Star, the past mistress of song, the one and only Marcella Sembrich. What Madame Sembrich does not know about singing may be a guarded secret closely kept by the Angel Israfel: but certain it is that such knowledge, if it exists, is not possessed by any one on this planet. It must be a wondrous joy to follow such a guide as the supreme Sembrich through the dear, but dangerous, labyrinths of music. Jeritza is to be envied for this experience. Envied too, she may be, and probably is, for the multitude of great gifts that are hers. She has beauty, she has youth, she has health, she has a titled position socially (Baroness von Popper is her real name). She has a great voice; she has also the necessary will-power, the unbending pertinacity that already has brought her to the highest reach of fame. And besides

all this she experiences in each performance that priceless joy—far greater than applause—the joy of creation, self-expression, giving utterance to the best that is in one. O Favored Lady! How can such things be—such perfection of existence? But suddenly I perceived, or thought I perceived, one tiny shadow that might at times dull, just a little, the astounding radiance of her life. What has she to look forward to, to strive for, what remaining ambition can she have? I was there to ask questions so I bluntly asked this one.

She smilingly answered: "My chief ambition right now—the one I am most striving for, I believe, is to have a vacation!"

Poor, tired Prima Donna! But no, not exactly that, for you see, she can not, she must not, she dare not be "tired"—at least not on the days she appears in public. She must *always be at her best,* because her performance is each time acclaimed or condemned not only by the audience, but by the press the next day. The actor giving the same rôle night after night attains by this very repetition a restful proficiency, but he may weaken sometimes, fall short of his best, and still escape being splashed by the splutterings of the critics.

How different the two arts of spoken drama and Grand Opera. The actor excels in realism, but the perils of his art are few compared to those of the opera singer. The actor is not eternally tethered to tempo. Madame Jeritza was keen on this subject.

"The actor may take a breath long or short as he chooses: he may lengthen his pauses or diminish them and nothing terrible will happen."

True indeed! and at any point in the play he may give new emphasis or a new hush to his words and his effect

will not be buried under by a crashing of instruments, nor made ridiculous by a sudden *sub-rosa* accompaniment.

But the actor's great advantage consists in the fact that he is expressing himself through his habitual, lifelong medium of vocal utterance—speech. It is not generally realized that the speaking voice, however multiple and marvelous its modulations, seldom uses a compass of more than five notes—tho these may be shaded and slurred into every minutia of subdivisions. I venture to say that even the highest uprise of vehement utterance barely reaches to an octave.

The opera-singer, however, while giving expression to the same emotions and words used by the actor, must add unto these not only one, but two acquired arts. Besides the habitual tones of the speech-compass he also uses the higher octaves—makes beautiful resonance in registers of voice never touched upon by the speaker. Not only uses them but blends them with the lower tones, joins them in a sequence so smooth that no break intervenes: this in itself is an art few singers attain to perfection.

But aside from these cultivated upper tones—these art-tones—never used in daily life, the singing actor uses also and at the same time the imperious, uncompromising medium of *music:* he uses two languages simultaneously, one written with words, the other with notes.

Madame Jeritza spoke feelingly, even sighed, at the thought of how seldom the arduous work of it is appreciated.

"We study a rôle, work day and night at the memorizing, keep the voice trained to it, learn the action, the tempos, the pauses, keep our ears trained too, lest by

some awful chance there is one note the least flat or sharp: with it all we must be graceful every moment, and feel deeply every emotion portrayed, and then, after all our efforts, some listener who is indifferent to the music, or feels disgruntled—has a headache, perhaps—will criticize what we have done and tell others he was unimpressed. Oh, it is hard—hard work." Madame Jeritza was terribly in earnest. There is a shadow-side, too, you see—even to a life of "Sunlight and Song." But I am sure she was thinking now of past experiences rather than of the present for she suddenly added, with cheering sincerity, "I must say, however, that American audiences are remarkably appreciative, and are fond of good music."

"What, and where was your first audience?" I asked, "your very first public appearance?"

"I first sang at a school concert in my native town." A cheering bit of news this will be to sweet sixteen who is planning now the white dress she will wear and the song she will sing when she graduates next June. But Jeritza was very young when she sang in that first school-concert. She was small, but the music she sang was big. You never can guess what it was. She smiled herself as she told it.

"I sang with a boy" (there was merriment in every curve of her face as she recalled that "boy"); "we sang the duet in the third act of 'Lohengrin.'"

I think she wanted to let it go at that, but I was merciless in my pursuit. "You mean the wedding-scene duet, after the chorus has gone out?"

"Yes, that was it," she admitted.

Now this isn't as funny as it sounds, tho we do enjoy the mental picture of the great Jeritza in school-

girl garb with yellow braids down her back, singing with bird-like impetuosity to a boy "Lohengrin," also terribly in earnest tho dressed in a velvet jacket and short trousers (I feel sure there must have been embroidery on the cuffs and collar), both of them singing with all their might Wagner's great wedding duo, usually pictured with a sumptuous medieval setting, a pair of enraptured lovers and a lavish glow of moonlight. How that "boy" and girl ever came to select such a grandiose composition for a school-concert, I don't know; but fate, I think, knew all about it. A few years later this same little girl with the same yellow braids (decked in pearls now and medievally draped upon her shoulders), this same little girl, somewhat taller, made her début in Grand Opera in a prima donna rôle; the opera was "Lohengrin."

She made early acquaintance with the music of Wagner, learned early to admire, understand and love the towering tone-structures of this master architect whose mighty chords like blocks of marble, rough-hewn or smooth, are each one immutably placed. The first opera she heard was "Die Meistersinger."

"I was only fourteen at the time, and, as you may imagine, was tremendously expressed—no, *im*pressed."

This was the only missed word during the interview, the only slip that might suggest a possible occasion for those lessons in English. A further question as to which opera most "im"-pressed her now, which one she loved best, brought promptly the reply: "The one I am singing in is the one I love best!"

I now asked about concert-work, whether she found it as interesting as singing in opera. She considered this question for a moment—gave it some real thought.

"Concert-work is, of course, more restricted—one

misses the freedom of expression; I can't tear my hair when singing a ballad, as I do when singing 'La Tosca.' "

Jeritza's *Tosca* in the second act is famous for the way she casts caution and coiffure to the winds—diamonds too; her hair tumbles to her waist, her tiara to the floor. But this isn't being done on the concert-stage, not even by Calvé, the original 33rd degree master of do-as-you-please effects when singing in public.

"But concert work is inspiring because we every time have a different audience." I glean from this that the perpetual round of subscribers at the opera, have a somewhat unnerving effect.

I asked some details of her coming tour—her concert season just begun. "We go as far as St. Louis, but must travel back and forth—go here and there." She suddenly asked me a question; the matter for the moment uppermost in her mind had elbowed its way to the front.

"Can you tell me how long it takes to go from here to Akron, Ohio?" (She pronounced it O-hee-o.) "I sing there on the 20th."

"About eighteen hours if you make good connections."

There was real alarm in her face. "But I must be back here the 21st. How can it be done?"

She called to her secretary; a confusion of questions on her lips. A mistake in calculation had evidently been made—American distances are an unending revelation to foreigners. But the dates were now unalterable; she must manage somehow to appear and sing with unruffled voice and steady breath, after a night and day of hurried travel—and just suppose the train should be late!

Poor, tired and troubled prima donna! But she was courteous and gracious to the last, saw me to the door—

even half-way to the trunks—and promised to send me her picture.

I am still asking myself how she will do it; sing in Ohio on the 20th and in New York on the 21st.

But the stars do move and have their being in strange, mysterious ways. This beaming star, Jeritza (this name, by the way, is astronomical—not baptismal) will shed her light somehow, I know, in two distant States on two succeeding evenings; she will shine in full glory, and touch the zenith each time. Such is my faith in this star of the East—my admiration for Maria Jeritza.

CHAPTER IV

"LA TOSCA"

A BLOOD-CURDLING story set to heart-wrenching music—this is "La Tosca."

Sardou, the greatest deviser of dramatic situations France has known, and Puccini, Italy's reigning monarch of music, form in this opera an international "combine" that is forceful and enduring and pulls at the heart-strings of the people.

"La Tosca" was a successful play long before Puccini was known. Sarah Bernhardt created the rôle; sobbed and shrieked and shivered in it till her audience was gasping for breath. Puccini must at one time have heard the play and participated in the whirlwind of feeling it aroused. When genius is stirred there follows a dream, many days of hard work, and then—creation. Puccini transmitted his emotions into music; but let us never overlook the intervening days of persistent work. Genius is divine—so is work. God himself, we are told, worked six days, or six eons, so mightily that the seventh was given over to rest.

The libretto of a Grand Opera is, for the most part, a thing of horror—a confusion of far-flung words, apparently without form, and void. Let us study for a while the little universe of balanced harmony and discord that Puccini created when he brooded over the "La Tosca" libretto and gave solemn command to his listening soul: "Let there be music!"

He saw first, as we see now when the curtain rises, the nave of an empty church in Rome in the year 1800. It is a massive, historic, peace-breathing church, everything

in it bespeaking worship and holiness; the only extraneous item being a scaffolding at one side that bears a huge easel and a canvas, now covered. Into this scene of impressive peace and sanctity comes a sudden plunge of world-terror and misery. An escaped political prisoner, just fled from the famed fort of San Angelo, rushes in panting, pursued, white-faced and frightened.

There is no prelude or overture to "La Tosca"; the music hurtles at once into action as does the story. The first chords in the orchestra, shattering the peace of the holy place, are a chromatic cataclysm; a ponderous, gasping, discordant sequence—triple fortissimo—that tumbles upon the listener and topples all his prearranged taste upside down He suddenly delights in strong, heady discords and daring, jagged rhythm.

There is certainly rebellion in this music, as there is in the heart of the escaped prisoner on the stage—late leader of an attempted Roman republic. These anarchistic chords, by the way, recur in the orchestra whenever the prisoner's name, *Angelotti*, is mentioned, throughout the opera. His present flight to this church, we soon learn, is prompted by a letter from his sister, an abettor to his escape. She tells him in the letter where he will find the key to the grilled gate of their private chapel (plainly seen at one side) wherein he may hide, for a while, till his pursuers are diverted. Nervously reading the directions as he looks here and there, *Angelotti* presently finds the key at the foot of one of the images; he shiveringly unlocks the iron gate, and disappears. The orchestra, still growling discords like a crouching, heavy-breathing, disturbed tiger, gradually subsides in its animosity; it rolls over and now blinks at the world with its other eye. Whoever said discords!

Avaunt such a thought! The Holy Roman Empire is a realm of perfect peace with touches of merriment mixed with its godliness. Comes a tripping staccato melody now in the orchestra, and on the stage a beaming brown-clad little sacristan. He has love in his heart—and a few minor sins—and a bundle of brushes in his hand. These he must clean for the artist who comes daily to work on the picture which he is copying from one of the murals: a life-size picture of the Madonna.

The sacristan babbles about the brushes—supposing the artist, *Cavaradossi,* to be up on the ladder—then, suddenly discovering no one there, he climbs up himself for a peep at the painter's lunch-basket, sent in every day and always enticingly full. A moment later, hearing the Angelus bell, the endearing old busybody hurries down and kneels for a bit of a prayer. His part of the devotion is, by its very suddenness, not over-intense—but the music prays for him; the pianissimo of the orchestra imparts a sweet sanctity to the well-meaning Fra.

Now follows the breezy entrance of *Cavaradossi,* late at his work, hurrying to the easel, flinging off his coat, then lifting aside the covering of his picture.

The sacristan, busy again with the brushes, looks too at the painting and exclaims with amazement: "It is a portrait!" He recognizes the likeness of a lady who of late has been praying daily before the image of the Madonna (the same image at whose base *Angelotti* found the chapel key; the lady, we learn later, was his sister). *Cavaradossi* admits the change he has made in his copy of the old master's painting. The lady was so beautiful and devout at her prayers that, all unknown to her, he has transferred to his canvas her golden hair and blue eyes. Even more than this has he done in the way of

divergence from the original he is supposed to be copying: the "dusky bloom" of his sweetheart, *Floria,* has been given to his Madonna's complexion; he is delighted with the effect—the contrast of coloring.

Foolish artist! Wise old sacristan! He crosses himself, is shocked at the change, and mumbles that no good can come from thus tampering with the tints of the holy picture.

All unconscious of the trouble he is brewing in trying to blend with the celestial the beauty of two women wholly terrestial, *Cavaradossi* exuberantly sings of the wonder of art, its power of commingling Beauty and Prayer and Love. Underneath his singing—his tenor tones—the sacristan inserts, ever and again, his chattering disapproval; and underneath both of these there sways and surges the unceasing sound of the orchestra, the great throbbing sea of emotion, with its countless undercurrents, upon which poor, petty mortals are forever striving to float calmly.

The duo ended, and the brushes cleaned, the sacristan patters toward the vestry, to a recurrence among the instruments of his own wholly adorable—but far from devout—tripping, staccato theme. With a final admonishment to *Cavaradossi* about remembering to lock the church door when he leaves, the genial little Keeper of the Keys goes out. The painter continues at his work and the music is still mindful, in a diminuendo way, of the recent religious jocularity.

Then the turn of a key in the side-chapel gate. *Angelotti,* thinking the church empty, now stealthily comes forth to make further flight. *Cavaradossi* hears and turns around. So does the orchestra; a crash of chords chromatic spells the agitation on the stage. The

prisoner, after his first terror, rushes forward, suddenly recognizing the painter as an old friend. *Cavaradossi,* for the moment amazed, soon responds with open-armed sympathy on learning of *Angelotti's* desperate plight, of his recent escape from San Angelo. He hurriedly locks the church door and bestirs himself to think quickly how best to assist his fleeing friend.

At this moment he hears from outside the door a familiar voice calling to him. A very beautiful voice it is, too, for it is that of his sweetheart, *Floria,* who is none other than Rome's leading prima donna of the day—the great *La Tosca.* Prima donnas, it would seem, have been temperamental from the time of Eve on down. What they want they must have—and at once. Eve did not balk at forbidden fruit, and now *La Tosca,* finding a closed door, insists on entering—and at once.

"Mario, Mario!" she calls, very beautifully, but very urgently. *Mario Cavaradossi* hurries *Angelotti* back into the chapel, after bethinking him to hand over to the starved fugitive his lunch-basket. Then he rushes to the locked door and opens it, receiving *La Tosca* eagerly enough—but observably breathless.

The glorious creature of his dreams sweeps in, radiantly in love with her artist, but all the same and very naturally, fretted with curiosity.

"Why was the door locked? Who were you talking to? I heard voices!"

This is a busy morning for *Cavaradossi.* His mind is still in a turmoil of excitement over poor *Angelotti,* but he is lover and artist enough to lie quickly and convincingly when occasion requires. The door was locked because of the sacristan's orders, and as for his talking—it was to her own precious image!

La Tosca wears a satin gown of the Napoleonic period, a huge plumed hat and an armful of flowers; she also carries a tall, audacious, gilded cane. Her appearance is so dazzling that it almost diverts attention from the music that accompanies her entrance. But this music is even more glowing and colorful than her costume. She has brought the flowers to deck the Madonna's shrine. This is not the sole reason of her church-coming but—let us not be too captious—she does lay the flowers on the pedestal, and then devoutly and gracefully kneels before it. The music at this point becomes tender, feminine, and ingratiating enough to hover about either a prayer or a love-scene. The throbbing strings of harp and violin breathe it to us; listen well to that gentle melody mounting like incense as *La Tosca* silently kneels.

But she does not kneel long; her thoughts are too urgent upon the other matter that has brought her here. She now explains to *Mario*—most winningly and with all elation—how she has planned for him to meet her to-night after she sings; the opera given is a short one, and they then can go together to their villa beyond the city. "The moon will be shining to-night."

If *Cavaradossi* were only listening he would hear that promised moonlight—hear it right now in the orchestra; not the time-honored tremolos on hushed pianissimo strings—Puccini must be original or perish—his moonlight is a weird sequence of whispered chords; a splash of silver on the composer's canvas. It is faint and dim but dripping with atmosphere. But *Cavaradossi* is not listening as he should; he is still too troubled over his friend's plight. *La Tosca* quickly notes his absent-minded assent to her plan. "You must say it better," she coquettishly insists. Then she sings to him, as a

prima donna should and would, sings to him of their happiness together in the flower-nested cottage—alone—alone. Those frail, flung chords of moonlight enmesh the music like fragments of mist on a dreaming landscape. But *La Tosca's* coaxing phrases are heavy-laden with the disarming power of naïve simplicity. Clarion clear as childish prattle is one little cadence oft-repeated. But through it all can be heard the urge of a throbbing, imperious womanhood. An Egyptian god—a stone colossus—must disintegrate to clay 'neath the insidious glow of this "palpitato," "abandonate," "molte dolce" aria of *Tosca.*

Cavaradossi flings brushes and friend aside as he responds to her final reiteration of that ingratiating, child-like plea. There is a masculine mightiness in the splendor of his reply: the first note he sings is high *B.* "My siren, my beloved—I will come!"

He clasps her in his arms, but a chance glimpse of the chapel-gate concealing *Angelotti,* recalls him to reality. He asks *La Tosca* to leave him now to his work.

This is no way to handle a prima donna. She is vexed at the dismissal. Instead of going she scrutinizes the all-important "work." She perceives that his Madonna has been changed from brunette to blond.

"Who is she? I don't like her! She is too handsome."

Cavaradossi stupidly parries her question. But *La Tosca* has seen that face somewhere—those deep blue eyes; she suddenly recalls the name of the lady.

"The Countess Attavanti!"

Cavaradossi applauds her successful guess. This, too, is not deftly done. The clumsy man-instinct in such matters restrains him from telling all—instantly and frankly. *Tosca* recalls the low voices she heard before

gaining admission; she recalls the locked door and now—this blonde beauty on the canvas!

One flash of fate—one second of time—can plunge all harmony into chaos—can insert a stinging dissonance into every quivering chord. Jealousy—panting, pounding jealousy—suddenly darkens the orchestral cosmos. In mounting, shrieking suspicion, *Tosca's* voice rings out surcharged with pain; for in all jealousy the feeling of resentment and blame is but an atom compared to the cataclysmic consciousness of inferiority, failure and crushing humility. But this cloaks itself in fury.

Cavaradossi sees soon enough what his thoughtlessness has done, and he has the good sense to call a halt by promptly relating the facts of the case; how he copied the pale coloring of the Countess as he watched her praying at her chapel altar—watched her without ever exchanging a word.

La Tosca finally believes him, sobs in his arms, and then—again seeing the painting—she steps away and, half in earnest, half in jest, still regrets and loathes those "blue eyes!" *Cavaradossi,* all tenderness, looks into her own eyes now and sings of them—of their power over him. Oh rhapsody of music! O splendor of love! Not only *La Tosca* but the entire audience responds to this outburst of glory—this pæon of rhythmic, engulfing harmony, and exalting melody. Weighted with a sweet delirium is the music of this great love duo.

None but Sardou, we fancy, could or would have devised such a *scène d'amour* in a sanctuary. But be not aghast. The music of the scene enwraps it as a benediction; music and love well-wedded must always reveal some reflection of the altar-lights of Heaven.

When the duo is ended *La Tosca,* again smiling, kisses

Cavaradossi good-by, and leaves him at last to his work—not before, however, giving one more pretty pout as she glances again at the picture.

"I do wish you would make those eyes black!"

As the door closes upon her the orchestra echoes dreamingly the three soft, sighing chords that throughout the recent scene have spelled for us—*amore.*

Then a quick change in the music. We hear again the agitated chromatics that troubled the air when the curtain arose and *Angelotti* hurried in. He again hurries forward from behind the grilled gate, where of course he has heard all of the recent scene with *La Tosca*—a little matter this which in no way bothers *Cavaradossi* for all Rome, it seems, knows that he is *La Tosca's* lover. But he does pause to explain why he refrained from telling her of his concealed friend; he feared she might reveal something of the incident to her confessor. A necessary explanation this—for had he taken her into his confidence this opera would never have been written—there would have been no tragedy to write about! To avert tragedy, tell all. Take that for the moral, if moral there must be. No good tale, we are told, is without one.

The scene between the two men is hurried and agitato and, for the most part, recitative. *Angelotti* tells of his plan to get away this night across the frontier. He brings from the chapel a bundle of clothes, a woman's outfit, which he intends to wear as disguise; his sister has placed them there for him—his sister, the Countess Attavanti. *Cavaradossi* now knows the occasion of her earnest prayers, the rapt devotion which he noticed and was impelled to reproduce on his canvas; she was praying for her brother's escape. He must escape not merely from the fortress—a staggering achievement in itself—

but thereafter he must escape from the far-reaching talons of the august chief of Police, the great and awful Baron Scarpia; autocrat and aristocrat, famed and feared throughout all Rome.

Cavaradossi rages at the thought of him, "the lascivious hypocrite—cross between a confessor and a hangman!" This man, with his net-work of spies, *Angelotti* must outwit and elude.

The artist hastens to advise his friend to hide for the day in his suburban villa, the same villa where *La Tosca* had planned they should meet that night after the opera. He tells *Angelotti* how he can reach it by a pathway through the fields; tells him also of an empty well in the garden with a concealed door in it where he may retreat if there is search in the villa before he gets started on his journey.

Just to instance the way of composers and the fineness of their art: tho the listener may barely note it, the same little phrase of Arcadian simplicity that hovered about *La Tosca's* first mention of the villa again asserts itself in the orchestra—flits about among the instruments, whispering to every one of them a reminder of the "flower-nested" little cottage.

A cannon-shot is heard in the distance—the fortress gun announcing an escaped prisoner!

High pressure in the music now, as *Angelotti* and the artist realize that *Scarpia* has "unleashed his hounds for the search." Impulsive friendship prompts *Cavaradossi* suddenly to go with *Angelotti* to the villa to make sure he finds the way. He has sworn to save his friend tho it cost him his life.

There is a hurried exit of the two men and then a surprizing change in the music. Puccini follows the tried

and true Shakespearean law—the law of life—that tragedy and comedy must run apace, are ever at each other's heels. He has barely capped the cadence to those world-weary, dissonant chords that forever follow *Angelotti;* has barely purged the atmosphere of this miasma and used the conductor's wand like a witch's broomstick to whisk the two men from the scene—has barely done this—when a breeze of familiar melody is let loose, and a pattering rhythm that we recognize at once as a merry preamble to the busy-body, batty-brained, lively little sacristant. He comes in a-tingle with news and a mouthful of words. Great news indeed he has to impart—he sputters with excitement—but pauses dismayed and disappointed on finding the easel-chair vacant. The audience he counted on is gone, but a moment later kind fate sends him a still better one. A troop of noisy choir-boys come bustling in on their way to rehearsal in the sacristy. Be assured those choir-boys have a theme and rhythm all their own, one which quite outdoes that of the little brown-cowl for prancing hilarity and good nature. Without losing one beat of its pulsing waltz-swing it does subside into the orchestra and pianissimo a bit while the old man tells his great news just learned from the Bishop—news, not yet made public.

"Bonaparte has been beaten! Victory! High doings this night! A celebration! A torchlight procession! Special music at the palace! A new cantata with *La Tosca* singing—and you boys, too!"

So elated is the old man that he sings a new tune himself as he tells this—a fling of youth the waltz-theme has inspired. The boys laugh and sing in accord, merrier now than ever; the celebration, the new cantata, means extra wages for them. Dance music in a church may

suggest the unseemly, but not when it is written by Puccini. Great music, well performed and well listened to, imparts at any time, anywhere, a stir of beneficence that may reach to the soul.

This scene of blessed noisiness and youth is at its height when suddenly at the doorway appears the awe-inspiring, magnificent *Scarpia*—a frown on his brow, his armed cohorts behind him.

"Why this high romping in a church?" His piety is shocked. The boys hasten out and the sacristan, after explaining the cause—the good news—would follow after, but *Scarpia* bids him stay. *Scarpia,* black-garbed but resplendent in satin and laces, a sword at his side and satan in his heart, bids his soldiers search the church and guard it, allowing no one to leave. The escaped prisoner has been traced to this building.

The affrighted sacristan then is questioned—is asked which chapel belongs to the Attavanti. The old man, showing the gate, is amazed to find this unlocked and a new key sticking in it. *Scarpia* himself steps inside to search the chapel, but soon emerges disappointed at finding it empty. He has picked up one trophy however—a lady's fan bearing the Attavanti coat-of-arms. *Scarpia* deduces quickly enough that the fair Countess has had a hand in her brother's escape. Then, looking about him, he notes the easel and the face on the uncovered canvas. He recognizes it, asks the name of the artist working here daily; he promptly recognizes, too the name *Cavaradossi,* "the lover of *La Tosca!*" How comes it that he, in copying a picture of the Madonna, should substitute the features of another woman—and that woman the fugitive's sister? Strange indeed! Strange, too, that his empty lunch-basket should be found in the

unlocked chapel. The sacristan dolefully testifies that the basket, a half hour since, was quite full. And why is *Cavaradossi* not here when he presumably should be at work? All this *Scarpia* learns and pieces together with a quick comprehension of the fact, that not only the sister but also the artist has assisted *Angelotti* in his flight.

There are various reasons why *Scarpia* finds a gloating joy in the prospect of hounding *Cavaradossi;* a keener relish this will give him than even the capture of the escaped prisoner. The only reason he will acknowledge however, even to himself, is the fact that the artist is known to be an unbeliever, and is already suspicioned by the Church. *Scarpia* is one who curtains his sensuality with a noisy barrage of sanctimoniousness.

From the moment of *Scarpia's* entrance until now the music has been dark with recitative, and with underlying discords of ominous sequence reminiscent of the fragmentary themes that pictured *Angelotti's* terror.

But suddenly the music changes: a memory of the love-theme illumines the atmosphere. *La Tosca* hurries in. She has returned to tell *Cavaradossi* of the sudden news that she must sing after the opera, sing for the celebration, and they can not get away to their villa as they had planned. Dire news, she deems it, and expects *Cavaradossi* to be disappointed as she is. But he is gone! She looks about her, searches for him, calls him, and then remembers only too quickly his eagerness to have her leave him—"so that he could work!" *Maledetto!* What does it mean?

Scarpia, always the schemer and observer, has concealed himself behind a pillar. He suddenly decides that the fan he has found can serve him as the lost handker-

chief serves Iago. But *Scarpia's* designs are even more weighted with *diablerie* than are those of the arch-villain of Venice.

While worshippers at back of the church are gradually assembling for the Te Deum, and the chancel bells in the orchestra are playing softly with a tranquil persistence that is blessed and soothing as gentle sunlight, *Scarpia* comes forward and addresses *Tosca* with a snaky sanctity that fairly slobbers. He moistens his fingers with holy water and then begs permission to impart the benison to her dainty hand. While the soft and hallowed campanile plays on, the suave-voiced *Scarpia* continues his reptile way with *La Tosca* by curve and coil of silken words. She hardly sees him—barely heeds him—as he commends her piety, so rare among artists and beautiful women.

"You come to pray, while others there are who, posing as saints, come here but to meet their lovers."

La Tosca hears this. "What do you mean?" she asks startled, tho still the gentle ripetando of bell-changes give peace to the holy place. But soon they cease—harsh jealousy tingles and vibrates through the orchestral bass as *Scarpia* shows Tosca the fan he found.

"It was on the easel," he basely fabricates. "The lovers must have been disturbed and in their sudden flight the lady left her fan."

La Tosca grabs it—looks closely and finds, as *Scarpia* intended she should—the crest of the Attavanti. He gloatingly watches the effect of his poison-shaft; perhaps he listens, too, but one doubts this, for if he heard as we do the wrung pain of *Tosca's* anguish—as expressed in the music—even *Scarpia*, it would seem, must have quailed at his work, and felt pity. A very splendor of

suffering illumines the music, gives a glow to the great minor chords that sob and throb 'neath the passionate pain of *Tosca's* outcry of grief over her lover's infidelity. She imagines him even now fled with the new love to that villa in which she had dreamed of spending rapturous hours this very night.

Again we hear the incense-laden song of the Cathedral carillon—a Gothic phrase, rigid, pure, austere—while hard upon this, like a gargoyle tacked to an aspiring arch, *Scarpia,* the sensualist, closely eyeing *Tosca,* insinuates words of comfort.

"Who has grieved you, fairest lady, that your eyes are moist with tears?" He declares he would give his life to help her.

But *Tosca* does not even hear him. She sees in her mind's eye her lover embracing another. Madness falls upon her. They shall not so mock her, in that villa of her heart's desire. Torn discords, violently wrenched from the full chordal structure that might have spelled harmony, now speed across the musical firmament: storm-clouds hurrying gloom upon the earth, and destruction. *Tosca* stares at the picture he was painting—that blue-eyed Madonna!—the siren of his choice! The storm breaks, the tumbling discords shatter the earth.

"You shall not have him! I swear it!"

"You swear—in a church!" The exultant *Scarpia* enacts shocked piety.

Poor *Tosca* weeps. "God forgive me!" she cries. The sorrow and deep wound, always the ultimate note of jealousy, again permeates the orchestra while the love-theme, that first sweet duo of happiness, is mockingly echoed as *Tosca* rushes out, maddened by memory and grief.

Scarpia has achieved his purpose; at least one of them. He bids his officers follow *La Tosca.* He is sure she will go straight to the hiding-place of her lover; the jealousy he has implanted will drive her there. She knows the place; of this *Scarpia* feels sure. Equally sure is he that she as yet knows nothing of the fugitive, the fugitive whom *Cavaradossi* is now concealing.

The officers make a hurried exit after receiving their orders and being told to report the result to *Scarpia* that night at the palace. *Scarpia* will be there because of the celebration. But just now he is in a church, tho he takes little cognizance of this; his thoughts are wholly absorbed by *La Tosca.*

The great music of the Te Deum begins, the organ peals; a kneeling crowd is near the altar at back of stage; the Cardinal and procession are seen to enter. There is everywhere the splendor and majesty that accompanies, or should accompany, the acclaim of the multitude when assembled together to give glory to God.

But *Scarpia* thinks only of *Tosca.* He believes there is now room in her heart—for *Scarpia.* By the jealousy he has aroused he will win her for himself. He does pause a moment to note his surroundings. When the Cardinal blesses the crowd, *Scarpia* momentarily bows his head with all needed reverence.

The service goes on: "Adjutorum nostrum in nomine Domini" with the chanted antiphon of those clear-voiced choir-boys, orderly now, white-robed and angelic.

An occasional boom from a distant cannon tells of the rejoicing abroad throughout the whole city because of the recent victory.

The organ-tones, with far-reaching throb of solemn magnificence, seem to hold together with sheltering wings

the straining instruments of the orchestra and the mounting chant of voices. And through it all there is heard, ever and again, the cogitating phrases of *Scarpia,* breathing words of vile desire for *La Tosca.* He plans to bring her to his arms and her lover to the scaffold.

Thus he muses one moment, and the next bethinks him to join in singing with seeming religious fervor: "Te æternum Patrem omnia," etc. Truly symphonic is this final scene, and those who have an ear to hear the majesty and meaning of it all may find in it food for thought, for wonderment and awe.

Counterpoint, the art of weaving divergent but simultaneous melodies into one harmonious whole, is an art so difficult and great that, as one authority has stated, it never yet has been actually and adequately achieved. And good reason there is to say this for it is indeed the art of the Divinity. He alone is the master of counterpoint. He alone can make all things, all thoughts, all sounds work together for good. One is minded, in this great finale of the first act of "La Tosca," of the Awful Mystery of Harmony which, in a way, is the Mystery of God.

In this music we hear panting discords and also intruding single notes that jar against the neighboring ones—but they come and go—nothing lasts, tho the singing boy who chants carols must cringe if he hearkens to the close-by pervert tones of *Scarpia.* Surely there is naught about us but cacophony—the listening boy might think. But if he sings well and firmly his part he will have no time to heed his jarring neighbors. And this is well, for it is beyond him to hear the mighty up-swelling ensemble, so timed and planned by the Great Composer that harmony, superb, absolving, uplifting, fills the universe for

those who have ears to hear; fills it with the great beneficence of a high and conquering climax.

A room in the royal palace—*Baron Scarpia's* private apartment—is the setting of "La Tosca's" second act. Lighted candles tell us that the hour is late. The heavy-lidded, luxury-loving libertine, magnificently garbed, is seated at a little table eating a tardy supper and while he eats, very exquisitely, a taste of fruit, a sip of wine, a petit gâteau, he is absorbed in thought. His occasional words reveal the trend of his revery. *La Tosca*—and again *La Tosca.* Much mention, too, is made of her lover, *Cavaradossi*—almost caught in the act of assisting an escaped prisoner. *Scarpia* hopes by morning to have both of these, the prisoner and the painter, hanging upon his tallest gallows-tree.

But the music, even more than the words, imparts to us the evil suspense, the tigerish waiting, of this spying, prying, licentious grandee. He sees tense moments ahead of him; the cautious, creeping culmination of his plans. There is frank impatience in the orchestra—unruly sequences pulling at the conductor's baton, a scatterment of octaves tossed here and tossed there—all a clear enunciation of the moods and torments of sensuality.

Scarpia rings a bell on his table. A soldier appears and is asked whether *La Tosca* has yet arrived for the cantata. They are awaiting her, we learn—she is late; they have sent for her. *Scarpia* bids the soldier-lackey open the window while he, going to the other side of the room, seats himself at a gilded desk to pen a brief note.

The large French window opens on to a courtyard in the palace, and as its swinging panes are flung wide we

hear from the halls below the exquisite strains of a gavotte; there is dancing before the Jubilee-Cantata is sung. *Scarpia's* turbulent discords and octaves are for the moment wiped out as the frail flower of this bygone dance wafts its memory lovingly to us.

Ah! but those days were good in spite of the "Scarpias" and the Inquisition. Those were dream-days, fine-edged and fraught with beauty—the days when custom decreed the tempered dance, the grace and courtesy that goes with sweet music.

You can judge a race and an era by its dance-music. The Hottentot's tomtom tells all one needs to know of that people. The wild glowing beauty of the Hungarian *zcardas* makes you at once feel the pulsing splendor of that race. The noisy Russian *dumka* sounds a suffering revolt that still expresses something of majesty in its very savagery. The slow temple-dance of the Hindus has in it a soft and sinuous danger but, even so, praise God! there is beauty clinging to it; a beauty undeniable, slumbering and exotic. But what in high Heaven's name can we hope for from a people that grovels its dance-tunes to the level of jazz! Dire indeed must be the doom that will fall upon souls so darkened that they can endure this monstrosity of cacophony; not only endure, but sufficiently delight in its blasts of rasping awfulness to prance and caper and hop to its hot shots of pervert rhythm. "Adjutorum nostrum in nomini Domini!" "God pity us" indeed.

But to return to the Pallazio Farnese and the seventeenth century. Whatever of impurity flourished there and then it was not nourished, incited and upheld by the dance-music of the day. Evil hearts there were then, as now, but music was esteemed as an art divine,

born of heaven and ever fragrant with the breath of celestial spaces.

Scarpia, let us note, pays no heed to the gentle harmony the opened window admits. Instead of listening to the tender appeal of that simple, happy-hearted gavotte sounding forth from a little group of earnest, honest stringed instruments, well-made and well-played upon, *Scarpia* persists in his devilish purpose. He writes a decoy note to *La Tosca,* and bids his attendant bring her hither as soon as the Cantata is finished.

"She will come," he gleefully assures himself as *Sciarrone,* the soldier, goes out. "She will come for the sake of her *Mario!*"

The gavotte has now ended and *Scarpia,* still absorbed in pleasant thoughts, sings the equivalent of what, in old-time Grand Opera, would be called the leading baritone aria. But modern operas cling close to realism; the singer does not step to the footlights and fling his high notes to the gallery. In this instance *Scarpia,* reseated at the table, appears to be merely thinking aloud, all unconscious, it would seem, that his evil phrases are carefully noted and that a horde of busy instruments are keeping pace and following after every thought he utters. There is symbolism here—truth aplenty. All our thoughts, unknown to us, attract and hold close a hovering company of vibrant spirits that make for us harmony or discord as the temper of our thoughts decree.

This song-soliloquy of *Scarpia's* is a libidinous statement of his fleshly philosophy: "I strive for the thing I desire; I possess it and then discard it, turning to other pleasures."

Puccini has furnished phrases here that are erratic, impressive and adequate, full of modulations. Even

villainy has climactic heights. The solo ends fortissimo and "allargando," with a reiteration in the orchestra of the bleak uncompromising octave-theme that opens this second act, and unmistakably spells *Scarpia*—the grim desolation of his soul.

Sciarrone now hurriedly reënters, announcing the return of *Spoletta,* the police-agent who in the previous act was told to follow *Tosca* as she left the church. *Scarpia* eagerly orders him shown in. *Spoletta,* promptly admitted, makes concise report of tracking *Tosca* to a suburban villa. (A familiar theme in the orchestra identifies that villa for us, did we have any uncertainty about it.) She was seen to enter, then soon to come out again, whereupon *Spoletta* and his men searched the house but failed to find the fled prisoner.

A fury of curses follows this announcement. *Scarpia* threatens *Spoletta* with the gallows—until he calms down enough to hear the further news. There was another man found in the villa—his name, *Cavaradossi*—an artist, and so suspicious and insolent were his replies to all of their questions that *Spoletta* has thought best to bring him thither, bound and manacled.

This cheering addendum to *Spoletta's* report promptly loosens the looming rope from his endangered neck, and dangles it over *Cavaradossi.* There is a new and ominous theme in the orchestra as mention is made of *Cavaradossi* in chains; a slight thing of single tones, weak-voiced and almost naked of harmonic clothing—a gaunt, anguished, submerged theme—but feeble as it is, you know it to be wrung, wrenched and drenched with pain. Call it, if you will, the theme of Fate, its woe will later on be pounded into your brain and heart till you tremble and gasp neath its suffocating weight. But just now it is

inert and barely audible, and you give it no heed at all for you are listening instead to something far more pleasing. *Scarpia* is listening, too, as through the open window there floats upon the air a sound as of choiring angels—the sweet fair harmonies of the cantata, just begun. *La Tosca* is heard singing with it.

Oh! It is a rapturous effect! Bravo Sardou, for devising it, and bravissimo Puccini, for the writing of this dear, tender, ecclesiastical, three-part cantata to be sung afar off and above a dire play of emotions, in orchestra, voice and action, that quakes with the panting breath of passion, lust, and murder. We listen to those distant harmonies and are minded of heaven. *Scarpia* listens and he, too, sees a light, but it is not from heaven; an idea flashes upon him, but its glow is from below. The mind, so tended and so bent, will somehow find hell where others find heaven.

Now joyed and exultant from the bright demon-plan suddenly schemed in his brain, *Scarpia* summons the manacled prisoner before him; also the official judge empowered to take testimony from prisoners who are forcibly impelled to loquacity.

Cavaradossi and his jailers soon enter while still through the window sounds the glad high-pealing cantata, and still in the orchestra wails that sobbing, tense, and quivering Fate-theme. It is a pulsing moment, this, when *Cavaradossi* enters; but it is only the beginning, a mere foreshadowing of the black, palling terror ahead.

Very quickly the scene begins, and with elaborate courtesy on *Scarpia's* part. He bids the prisoner be seated. A haughty "no, thank you," is the reply, and then the two face each other in a gripping, clenched

silence as they hearken—both of them—to *La Tosca's* soaring voice in the cantata.

A moment later *Scarpia* forces himself to his painful duty. With apparent reluctance, but a gloating heart, he tells *Cavaradossi* the cause of his arrest: that it is known he has assisted a dangerous criminal to escape. He now is asked to tell where that prisoner is concealed. *Cavaradossi* denies everything, insists he knows nothing, in spite of the minute details, the clear circumstantial evidence that his accuser and the *gendarmes* have against him. Very quietly and firmly the known facts are stated by *Scarpia,* and very steadily and stubbornly they are denied by the prisoner—while still the mounting cantata, dim, divine, sublime, spires heavenward with praise to God. And still deep down in the orchestra that muted torture-theme tears at our hearts and ever and again creeps its way into prominence.

Scarpia finally changes his tone. He threatens, grows angry, and flings rapid questions, each one quickly answered by *Cavaradossi,* sometimes with an insolent laugh. Wrought up at last to the point of action, and annoyed for the moment by the distant singing, *Scarpia* cuts this off by a brusque closing of the window. Then he asks again—once, twice, three times—"where is Angelotti?"—and as many times he receives the answer: "I do not know."

The music is no longer subdued. Discords, the wild weeds of harmony, have sprouted and grown thick amid heaving tremolos that suggest a furrowed earth. Then a sudden change in the tonal mood proclaims the coming of *La Tosca.* She hurries in, startled, alarmed—sees her lover—cries out his name, "Mario!" and rushes to his arms, manacled tho they be. In the swift moment of

that embrace he charges her in a determined aside to say no word of what she has seen at the villa. "Admit nothing." She nods understandingly and promises to obey.

Scarpia—all his assumed patience now vanished—announces icily: "The Judge is waiting, Cavaradossi, to take your deposition." A secret door is flung open; the prisoner and the guards pass through it.

Something, too, is suddenly flung loose in the orchestra—the torture theme! No longer a thing of single tones, bare and cringing, it now is robed in full array of somber, darkling chords that trail their way of gloom in ponderous awfulness across the scene; a monstrous Nemesis dominating for the moment all creation. One senses the vastness of a final doom, an ultimate omega, the formless void that once was, and that again may be.

But such visions of immensity are fleeting. We glimpse and gasp, and then—a closed door. This occurs just now both in fancy and fact. The door of the torture-chamber is closed upon *Cavaradossi,* the gendarmes, and the judge. *La Tosca* and *Scarpia* are left alone. Like panther and prey they eye each other—*Tosca* as yet undismayed—*Scarpia* cat-like and calm, with the cool confidence of certain victory. It is all told plainly in the music before ever the participants utter a word.

Very quietly the instruments feel their way about till they find and clutch onto and develop a theme and rhythm so fitting in its decoying grace and suavity that one shivers and sits straight, all tense with apprehension, knowing as we do what *Tosca* has promised and what *Scarpia* intends. He now adopts the passing theme—those insinuating triads in languid *tempo di valse*—to carry forward his wily words. A courtly salon scene done in music, delicate and graceful as a Dresden china group, is the

present brief play of tort and retort between *Scarpia* and his victim. He bids her to be seated while they have a friendly talk, bids her have no fear. She professes calm indifference; declares she has naught to conceal. He questions—oh, so gently—she replies with equal quiet; their every phrase modeled upon that slyly, sleepy waltz-theme in the orchestra.

Then a change. *Scarpia* calls through the closed door: "What says the Cavalier?" The gendarme replies: "Nothing." An order is now given to "make the pressure stronger." *Tosca* hears and wonders, demands to know what is happening behind that closed door. Then *Scarpia* brutally tells her the law is being enforced: a steel filet binds her lover's head and is tightened more and more till the blood spurts forth and the torture is unbearable.

"But you—you can end his pain by telling me where is Angelotti."

Tosca cringes and shrieks at his fiendish plot, but denies all knowledge of *Angelotti.* The orchestra bites and snarls in a squirming entanglement of new themes and old. *Cavaradossi* is heard crying out with pain, and with every tightening of the torturing steel, there is ground out in the orchestra—scraped and sawed out—a merciless theme, ponderous, immutable, calmly crushing—propelling, then receding—with the deadly accuracy and majestic indifference of iron wheels, huge, smooth and glibly turning.

Again and again this crunching, grinding theme in the orchestra alternates with *La Tosca's* voice as she pleads for mercy in an out-crying theme of her own that pierces to all hearts—to high heaven—in its splendor of

intensity and melodic sweep. But it does not reach the heart of *Scarpia;* only cold steel can do that.

He sardonically maintains his silky graciousness of manner and music as he grants *Tosca* permission to speak to her lover through the door, during the interims of torture. He even opens the door that she may see the sufferer, his lacerated brow and white, drawn face; all of this agony she is assured, again and again, she can instantly halt by telling where *Angelotti* is concealed. But *Cavaradossi* still charges her in cryptic asides to guard the secret—tell nothing.

The door is again closed and the torture is resumed. That theme of iron in the orchestra plows forward again, while poor *Tosca* rails and wails at her demon tormentor. She withholds the secret, still declaring she knows nothing, until *Scarpia,* infuriated and determined, gives final orders to the gendarmes—orders well understood: "Force him to speak."

A sharp outcry of unthinkable pain soon sounds from the closed room, a cry so rending that it promptly unseals poor *Tosca's* lips.

"Angelotti is hiding in the well," she murmurs, as *Scarpia* stands waiting and ready to give the signal for her lover's release from the rack.

He is presently brought in half-fainting, the great and dolorous first torture-theme accompanying him as he enters. *La Tosca* rushes to him, happy that he still lives, and all-unheeding the gloom of that torture-theme, that sullen foreshadow of Fate.

The shadow enlarges quickly. She is not long allowed to ignore it. *Cavaradossi,* faint as he is, rejoices too, not only because he lives and finds her at his side, but because he did not succumb and betray his friend—the

friend whose cause he favors—leader of the Rebellion he would gladly have seen triumphant.

Scarpia, with evident relish for the dramatic situation he has contrived, chooses this moment to give orders for the capture of *Angelotti* at the villa. "You will find him in the old well."

Cavaradossi rises up like a struck lion. He flings *Tosca* from him, enraged that she has revealed the secret. The *Angelotti* discords pound their way snarlingly in the orchestra—show their teeth—growl and howl at all creation as *Cavaradossi* storms over the betrayal of his friend. He is all unmindful of *La Tosca's* anguish, the suffering love that prompted her disclosure; the impulse to save his life when she believed him tortured to the point of death. He pities only his friend—not the woman whose love and devotion are far more deserving than that of his friend.

La Tosca is the star of this opera—not *Cavaradossi.* He is considerable of a fool from first to last. He starts out by transferring to his canvas the face of a blonde beauty instead of the old master's model he was supposed to be copying, and he expects his Tosca to be undisturbed by this preference on his part. Then he rates friendship so superlatively high that he unhesitatingly dismisses his loved one from the church, almost curtly, and without explanation. This, too, he expects her to endure with equanimity. And now he casts her from him—actually curses her—for betraying his friend, tho her action was prompted by profoundest love. At this moment sudden news is brought to the Palace. *Sciarrone* rushes in excitedly to tell it—a message just come from the front. The recent victory has been celebrated too soon—Bona-

parte has turned it into defeat. He has conquered at Marengo. Italy has lost.

Cavaradossi, by way of final folly, now betrays his aversion to the government by hurrahing at this news. Poor *Tosca* tries to stop him, urges him to silence, if only for her sake. But it takes more than love to hush a fool enthusiast. He shouts exultantly: "Victory! Victory! Now let the tyrants quake!"

There is just one bit of excuse, one mitigating urge, to explain this senseless outburst. Puccini has created for him a revolutionary hymn so fiery in its climax that it would arouse any mob to violence—any fool to frenzy—be the cause what it may. Those mighty chords, solemn, monumental, up-mounting, surge on in sweeping rhythm like the prayer of a seething multitude storming Heaven with insistent cry. It is splendid and magnificent, but very naturally sounds the knell for *Cavaradossi.*

Scarpia orders him off to prison. The gendarmes drag him away from *Tosca's* restraining arms. She wishes to go with him to prison—such is woman's love—but *Scarpia* closes the door and orders her to stay. Then in an instant authority, barbarity, those dogs of war and lust, are kennelled; the panther's claws are sheathed, tho *Tosca* still eyes her inquisitor with the terror of a trapped mouse. But this similitude soon changes as the chameleon qualities of womankind enable her gradually to assume something of the feline herself.

Again there is bated tort and retort between them, spiced with a satanic repose, as *Scarpia,* cool, elegant and courteous, pours wine for *La Tosca*—bids her be seated as he resumes his supper, and proposes another friendly little talk with her. That purring waltz-theme resumes sway in the orchestra, makes itself at home, settles down

as it were for a cozy, quiet little hour, when, suddenly, a sharp scratch from the leashed tigress—that is *Tosca,* gives a phosphorescent glow to the scene and the music. She has taken the seat offered her, wearily sipped of the wine, then without warning she leans across the table and asks in contemptuous, hissing *parlando*: "How much?" It is a brave, desperate lunge on her part. She has jewels and money, has always been well-paid for her singing; she will bribe this heartless official. Scruples, she is sure, he has none. She is right, he scruples at nothing. He frankly admits this, calmly and with the inimitable repose of a waiting cat who knows that the hole he has seen the mouse enter is without other exit than the one he is watching.

Accompanied by a theme that is positively slumbrous in its suave and restful progressions, *Scarpia* informs *Tosca* that when he sells himself—sells his fealty to office to ladies fair—he must be paid in coin far weightier than paltry sums of money.

Yes, he has a price, a price by which she can save her lover.

He tells her he has long waited for this hour. He knows that she hates him, but her very hatred makes him love her. Monstrous perversion! The music is turbulent now, a brew of unholy discords and affrighted tremolos, as *La Tosca* shivers back in horror at the lascivious utterance of this vilest of arch-villains: "I have vowed you shall be mine—wholly mine!"

Tosca rushes to the window threatening to fling herself from it. Her tones soar out in the familiar theme of her plea for mercy when *Cavaradossi* was being tortured. This alternates now with *Scarpia's* hellish theme of lustful purpose.

At her suggestion of suicide, he announces that her lover's life hangs upon her act. She rushes to the door, suddenly minded to appeal to the Queen. *Scarpia* perceives her purpose and calmly bids her go if she will; but he adds that the Queen's pardon will not much benefit a dead man. The more *Tosca* loathes him, reviles him—calls him demon, coward, satyr, villain—the more he urges, pursues, and declares that her anger but adds to her beauty and intensifies his love.

In genuine terror she calls for help. But her cry is unheard for a new sound intrudes upon them; both she and *Scarpia* give pause to listen. A drum, solemnly tapped, is heard approaching.

Again resuming his fine-polished, damnable repose, *Scarpia* quietly informs her that the drum-beats accompany the escort of the men who are on their way to the scaffold. *Tosca* sinks back wearily upon the sofa, as *Scarpia*, glancing through the window, announces further that his men right now are raising the gibbet.

Still those drum-beats. Nothing else for a moment; then another quiet word from *Scarpia:*

"It is, I take it, your will that Cavaradossi dies within an hour?"

Hideous silence fills the air as *Scarpia,* his eyes evilly fixed on *Tosca*—complacently pours himself a small cup of coffee and placidly drinks of it.

Tosca does not move. She seems as one stunned. She can no longer think. There is but one thing she knows, one thing she can do. When all else is numbed with suffering, there still stirs in *La Tosca*—Rome's leading prima donna—her life-long habit of song. Music flutters to her lips, she sings to herself—lariats her panic thoughts by the firm rhythmic swing of a far-reaching melody.

Scarpia listens, as we all do, and the orchestra too; tho it listens merely to follow after, faintly and tenderly, with a touching harmony, this heart-cry of poor, beaten crushed and harrowed *Tosca.* It is the high moment in the opera for the soprano rôle. "Vissi d'Arte" is the name of this meditative aria. "Devoted to art and to love I have never done anyone wrong, have always been kind to the poor, always faithful in prayer; O why, Heavenly Father, dost thou now forsake me?" These are the words, freely translated, of this most famous of Puccini's arias.

Madame Jeritza fairly startled the world, and shook some of the stars by singing the entire composition while lying supine and exhausted on the floor! Tho some there be who have questioned the art and good taste of so daring an innovation, none can deny that as a feat of vocal endurance it can hardly be surpassed. To toss from your mouth tones that reach the heart of your audience, when you are facing it only with the top of your head as you lie stretched out on the floor, is an achievement in tone-balancing truly acrobatic. But with no effort at all Madame Jeritza accomplishes this astounding fling of realism, this effect of don't-care despair on the part of poor *Tosca.* Pianissimo but penetrating, her glorious voice fills every part of the great Metropolitan auditorium.

Heavy with tears seem the child-like phrases of this melody at first, or the weakened cries of a wounded bird, but at the last they mount high and break forth into a reckless bruised beating of wings at the closed gate of fate.

There is a quick subsidence—a panting sob and a

pause—then the unmoved voice of *Scarpia:* "Make your decision, Tosca."

She kneels now before him, entreats him to have mercy. But whatever she does seems only to add to the misery of her plight. With tear-wet eyes and tumbled hair she is "far too lovely to be resisted," the scheming *Scarpia* sweetly assures her. There is a recurrence in the orchestra of that slumbrous theme of evil charm—the very psychic aura of *Scarpia*—a theme that could bite and corrode at the heart of all existing morality. With bestial frankness he reiterates his terms: her lover's life for one brief hour of her favor. Again she spurns him. "Go, villain—you make me shudder!"

A knock at the door and a hurried entrance of *Spoletta.* Again important news. He reports that *Angelotti,* on finding himself captured, swallowed poison, and is dead.

"Hang his corpse on the gibbet," is the cool reply. Then *Spoletta* inquires what shall be done with the artist, *Cavaradossi,* still in chains.

Scarpia turns to *Tosca,* now seated on the sofa, dejected, despairing, forlorn.

"What say you?" he asks of her meaningly. There is a pause in the music. I sometimes think there are strange, startled moments when all creation gives pause, holds bated breath, for a single soul that is swinging in the balance. Whether *Tosca* does ill or well it is not for us to know. We only know—in that awful pause—that *Tosca* nods assent.

But now, the die once cast, she becomes alert, thinks quickly, and strives to make a sharp bargain. *Cavaradossi* must be released at once. *Scarpia* explains to her, with ghastly graciousness, that this in effect shall be done within an hour, but it must be accomplished secretly. It

must be reported that he is dead. His crime of assisting a fugitive revolutionist requires this, but the report will be false, the execution only simulated. This has been done in rare cases before.

"*Spoletta* can be trusted. You yourself can hear me give the order, and you yourself shall carry the news to *Cavaradossi*—shall tell him of the unloaded guns he will face for a moment—a mere pretense, before he flees the province."

Thus assured, *La Tosca* numbly listens while *Scarpia* with significant tone and glance bids *Spoletta* carry out the execution of *Cavaradossi,* as it was done in the case of Palmieri. "Simulated, you understand, as we did with Palmieri."

Spoletta understands perfectly, nods his head wisely and goes out.

The door again closed, *Scarpia* flings aside his official bearing and approaches *Tosca* with leering words and glowing glance. "I have fulfilled my part of the bargain." But his victim, again alert, makes quick reply: "Not yet. You must give us a safe conduct to leave the country."

With his wonted excrescence of graciousness, putrid politeness, *Scarpia* bows assent and crosses the room to his desk where he correctly fills out the needed permit.

During the interim of his writing, *Tosca,* knowing that her last card has been played, steps wearily to the neglected supper table; she sips a glass of wine, and observes languidly, inertly, then with slow-forming purpose, a sharp-pointed knife on the table. Mark well the theme now possessing the instruments; it is vivid as a spoken soliloquy.

Before *Scarpia* turns with the signed paper in his hand, *Tosca* has seized the knife and holds it behind her.

He comes hastily forward, a smile on his lips, his baleful charm-theme in the orchestra—with outstretched arms he comes to embrace her. A quick stab of steel is the caress he receives.

Seething frenzy fills the orchestral bowl, pagan discords—pitiless, defiant—tear at each other as *Tosca* leans over the fallen *Scarpia,* brandishing the dripping knife—mocking him in his death-struggle—shrieking at him a defiant joy in his choking agony—his well-deserved end—her vengeance! But no madness of words can equal the accumulated torment of tones in the orchestra. After much violent clashing they at last simmer down to a frank, unabashed propounding of the whole-tone scale in creaking thirds. Twelve cold-blooded brazen measures of this chop-stick awfulness is ample to express any manner of dementia.

By the time these untamed, untuned, trailing thirds have gasped themselves into silence—as *Scarpia* too has done—*Tosca* comes to her senses, all five of them, fully awake and keen. After seeing that *Scarpia* is thoroughly dead, her first words, woman-like, are a kindly assurance to the departed:

"Now I forgive you!"

The strange, hushed, soliloquizing theme that tiptoed about in the orchestra when she stood at the table and first saw the knife—first gently contemplated the appealing thought of murder—now again rules the instruments. There is deep psychology in this theme; it is one of the most direct, simple, and comprehensive themes in the opera. The underlying occasion for its straightforward simplicity lies in the fact that as a rule, there is no awfulness to the impending deed in the eyes of the prospective murderer; it seems to him at the time the one alternative,

JERITZA AS "TOSCA"

the one sane thing to do; its true proportions have not appeared to him. Immediately afterwards, and for a short time following, delirium still holds sway, and also a sweet quietus from the unbearable emotion, whatever it was, that impelled the act.

So *Tosca,* numbed to all feeling save the relapse from fear, moves about calmly in this horror-chamber in accord with that tranquil, contented, reassuring theme in the orchestra. Her mind works clearly. She pours water from a glass on the table to rinse her finger-tips. She bethinks herself to unclasp from the dead man's hand the needed paper he had just signed. Then to prove her forgiveness of him, now that he is dead, she reverently places two lighted candles on the floor beside him in accord with the custom of her church—one may be a murderer and still a Christian—thus unlogical is the strange unreason of a fear-frenzied brain in its hour of tense strain. She sees a crucifix on the wall, climbs on a chair to get it—poor little, dazed little murderess that she is—and she places the crucifix on the dead man's breast.

The quiet sustaining theme has grown fainter now. There is scarcely a sound in the orchestra. The breath of death seems to exude and envelop the darkened stage with its dim two candles guarding the outstretched figure on the floor.

Tiptoeing her way, *La Tosca* takes up her cloak, steps to the door—opens it partly and looks to see that none are near—then silently slips out, closing the door behind her.

Historic San Angelo, facing the Eternal City, this grim, brooding castle on the Tiber, has served as the

gateway to Heaven or hell to all doomed prisoners of Rome throughout the centuries of political uprisings and down-fallings. Tragedies untold have been enacted upon its sullen parapets, many of them unnoted, unsung, merely because they were so commonplace. One of these, or the similitude of one, we now see unfolded in the third act of this Puccini opera.

We see a somber stage-setting. There are bright stars above, and a sunken stairway at one side suggests dark cells beneath this embrasured platform of the gloomy castle. In the background, beyond the crenellated wall, in the dim brightness of the night we see sleeping Rome, or part of it, with the Vatican and the Basilica plainly outlined. There is a little table on the stage, with a lantern above it, and a bench beside it. Nearby a crucifix hangs on the wall and a votive light. Nothing else to be seen; nothing moves—save the music. Faint stirrings of the night may be heard—or call it if you like, the stillness of the dawn—for never, that I know of, has stillness been so marvelously sounded. Puccini is a wizard in the first half of this last act of "La Tosca." This orchestral prelude, after the curtain rises, positively frets one with its twanging, resounding portrayal of silence—for the most part pianissimo, it still does not balk at a crescendo, a frank fortissimo, which nevertheless by some unhallowed necromancy, never for a moment shatters the pervading hush of the night. The effect is for the most part achieved by soft-stepping sequences of consecutive fifths, a veritable covey of contraband discords, brazen enough, however muted, to make the all-righteous Beethoven shiver in his shroud. But, by foul means or fair, Puccini gets his effect tho we shudder

in our seats at the gloom and dark foreboding of that pregnant silence so mercilessly sounded.

While harmony is tossed to the winds, rhythm remains ever dominant, tho varying, it may be, as the waves of the sea. We are drenched, submerged, uplifted and exhilarated by Puccini's unending divergencies of rhythms. They beat upon us resistlessly and compelling. There are strange undercurrents of rhythms that counter great billowing upheavals, then, in turn, complacently roll over and through them, but always and ever, as in life itself, we sense the great unerring pulse of time. Thus intricate and marvelous is music—great music—marvelous in its way as the eternal cosmos, for it is, of all arts, the Divine one.

While still the stage is dark and we are tense with the pall of those whispering discords, others are added unto them: the jangle of distant sheep-bells are heard, and then a melancholy shepherd lad, leading his flock through the silent streets, croons a despairing love-song. Heaven pity us! How despondent that lone boy is! We could swear he himself, single-voiced, was singing a wail of consecutive fifths! He pipes such a drone of discordant misery.

"If you could prize me—to live I might try.
If you despise me—I may as well die."

Maybe he thinks he is singing a tune—poor, untutored lad, alone with his sheep in the dank, drear darkness that ushers in the dawn. Frankly his music is a rare portrayal of uncouth utterance, but plaintive and appealing, however crude, by the sheer vital force of its verity.

With the passing of his song a new sound intrudes—

and the Eastern sky shows a shimmer of dim gray. A distant bell is heard, faint but insistent—self-important in fact, for it is the matin bell of a busy church. There are many of these in Rome. Soon another is sounding, then another, some nearer, some farther away, and—let me tell you—those bells proceed on their appointed way, delightfully and prodigiously unconscious of each other! When one in the west is comfortably pealing *B* flat, there is one in the east energetically hanging on *A* flat, and presently another will ring in with *E* natural, and next thing you know *D* natural from somewhere toward Pisa is sounding in whole-heartedly and unabashed. But after that shepherd song nothing whatever in the way of tone philandering can disturb us. The bells are mellow and distant, "sweet bells" indeed, tho most emphatically "jangling out of tune"—as in reality a whole city full must do. But sure I am that the overtones of all the church-bells in the world mount Heavenward in sweetest unison. The exquisite mystery, the ultimate blending, of the overtones of sound, is a secret that only God knows.

But to return to the bells of dawn on the Roman Campagna. Puccini has jotted them down as he heard them, and then turned them loose, disregarding them entirely while he busied himself with his orchestra where he has deftly fished up on the strings a brand-new rhythm and a slender new theme. The bells are now very far away and the music all is gray and pensive as the reluctant day so slowly dawning.

A sleepy jailer now emerges from below slowly ascending the little stairway. He lights another lantern, hangs it near the crucifix, looks over the parapet to see whether the firing-party is yet approaching, then yawn-

ing, he sits down on the bench. He really could not yawn did he hear the orchestra now. It has changed its tune, a new theme has entered—softly, it is true, and *rallentando*—but he who hears this melody is awake—torn awake—made to suffer with it, to weep and to mourn. One's very soul sheds tears at the sound of this bleeding melody. No greater music has Puccini written than these most mighty phrases now stalking into prominence—first in the orchestra, later on in the voice. Unmindful, as humanity ever is, of the beauty and the pain all about them—the dawning day and the rending music—a picket of infantry comes up the stairs guarding *Cavaradossi*. A paper is handed to the jailer, who has dutifuly arisen to salute. He opens his registry-book—studies the paper for a moment—and the picket-sergeant signs in the book. He then leads his group of automaton men below stairs again, leaving *Cavaradossi* to self-communion until the fatal moment; they will then return with guns all set.

Cavaradossi and the jailer exchange a few words—curt and colorless in themselves, but timed and tuned to the tale-bearing sobbing instruments. *Cavaradossi* wishes to write a letter, his last words on earth, if the jailer can grant the permission and can promise to have it delivered. The present of a ring, from the doomed man's finger, wins from the jailer the desired favor. "Write your letter," he quietly concurs—and then disappears into the guard-house, leaving *Cavaradossi* at the table with pen in hand.

He is writing, of course, to *La Tosca*. He traces a few lines, as the engulfing theme of their first love-song sweeps into the orchestra with tidal intensity. Poor prisoner of Death! How can he hold himself down to

the penning of words—one at a time—when the whole book of memory is fluttering before him, its swift-turning pages, torn and frayed, caught in a flame, it seems—some of them all burned and charred. But one page of memory he clasps and clings to. It tells of his meetings with *Tosca* in the little villa—in the garden by moonlight when her soft arms clasped him.

The recent new theme in the orchestra, whose disturbing power we already know, has again come forward to beat at our breast and bear us down under its pitiful weight of woe. Not only do the instruments wail and sob neath the strain of its tearing heart-break, but the singer too, grief-broken, at the little table, alone in the gloom of this his last dawn, he too lends his voice, full-throated and a-throb with anguish—he too joins in with the hushed glory of this inspired theme of music at its best. And when that singer was Caruso, no greater cry of sorrow ever winged apast the proscenium than his final climax and ensuing sob in this supreme aria of "La Tosca": "My dream of love is vanished, and now I die despairing."

Bowed in tears *Cavaradossi* does not note the change in the music, nor the sound of footsteps. *Spoletta,* obedient to the orders given him by *Scarpia,* has admitted *Tosca* to the castle and escorted her to the parapet to "warn the prisoner herself," as *Scarpia* promised her—of the change of plans—the "simulated firing," etc. *Tosca* is now left alone with her lover save that *Spoletta,* before descending, has cautioned the jailer within the guard-house to keep his eye on the two.

Cavaradossi, still indifferent to all sounds, has not raised his head until *Tosca*—too full for words—suddenly places beneath his eyes the paper she secured from

Scarpia—the paper promising freedom and safe conduct to Civita Vecchia. The condemned man sees her at last—sees the paper; they read the magic words in unison together. He is dazed—uncomprehending.

"But *Scarpia!*—this sudden mercy!"

Then she tells him all: *Scarpia's* dastardly offer—for a price—her final seeming acceptance and then—the knife!

Traces of *Scarpia's* invidious love-theme, the sound of the gallows-building, and also the hushed deliberate musing theme that marked her forming purpose of murder—all these play through the orchestra during *Tosca's* telling of the terrible deed she has done.

Cavaradossi mutely takes her hands in his—her "blood-reeking hands," as she calls them—and kisses them. Then in utmost tenderness of melody and voice he sings of those soft white hands always heretofore so pitiful and gentle. It is touching and simple as a child's lisped prayer, this tribute of praise and gratitude—this melody he softly sings to the hands that have saved him.

She hushes his song with her further explanations and plans; tells him in tuneful undertone—winsome in its happy clarity—how in order that the authorities shall believe him dead, there must be a make-believe execution. He must stand up and be fired at, but the guns will have only blank cartridges. He must fall when they fire, and remain still till the soldiers go, then—freedom!—freedom! By means of the paper she holds they can hasten to Civita Vecchia. She has her jewels with her and money. They can take ship from there and sail away—away—to life and love!

Listen now to the song of the waves—the laughing billows in the orchestra, tossing with foam and a salt sea breeze. Tho all pianissimo you feel the bounding

force of it and have a vague sense that a few pages of this vigorous undertow would carry them half-way over seas. But tho all things change naught changes so oft as the eternally varying sea. The choppy joy of harbor wavelets we presently hear transmuted into the placid heave of a deep-sea current. It too carries you on and away; the lovers sway with the rapture it breathes; they sail on a bark of hope, as first one then the other sings in sweet exaltation of the joy that awaits them. O, dear delusion of happy harmonies and pulsing harpchords! Like the sure repose of a swimmer afloat on a sunlit sea is the peace of this last duet.

Tosca pauses to instruct him again, almost merrily, jestingly, how to enact his part, how to fall when they fire, and how under no circumstances must he move until she tells him they are gone. He promises, with equal buoyancy, to act as well and as tragically as *Tosca* herself does on the stage.

Now they hear the firing-squad approach. In almost defiant exhilaration they sing, even now, one last upmounting song of joy—of freedom soon to be—sing sans accompaniment—sans everything but their own soaring spirits; they no longer tread the earth—so great is their hope and their joy.

Dawn is breaking, there is light in the sky, a bell is sounding, a clock nearby is striking four. The soldiers appear coming up the stairway.

A moment more—one foolish little moment to allow for the foolish little farce of a mimic execution—then away—away! *La Tosca,* all impatience, waits at the guard-house door, watching the stupid preliminaries.

The soldiers offer *Cavaradossi* the usual handkerchief to blindfold his eyes. He refuses, he prefers to keep

his glance on *La Tosca's* bright face in the doorway behind them. He is glad she can watch how artistically he will fall when they fire. She waves a merry hand to him.

The guns are raised. There is a moment's pause in the orchestra—then a shot—and the prisoner falls to the floor, just as planned. A business-like, energetic theme, the same one that accompanied their entrance, now ushers the soldiers, single file, down the stairs. *Tosca* watches their departure most carefully, constantly warning *Cavaradossi* in little asides, not to move—not yet. At last they are alone.

"Now, now, get up! We can go!"

She rushes to him, calls him, kneels at his side, turns him toward her, his face upward—it is the face of a corpse! There was no "simulated" execution—just the simulated order for one. Horror upon horror is the ending of this opera. A moment later poor, grief-frenzied *Tosca,* hears a disturbance below—cries of "Murder in the Palace!" *Scarpia's* dead body has been discovered. Already they are after her. Soldiers are again mounting the stairs, this time in precipitous haste.

With one wild shriek of madness, *La Tosca* springs to the wall of the parapet and before they can seize her, leaps to her death.

CHAPTER V

MARY GARDEN AS I FOUND HER

THERE is a strange, weird energy wielding its force in the world to-day; a force hard to classify, but a force far-reaching, at times dangerous, at times beneficent; its name is Mary Garden.

I think the Fates, or Greek gods, or Karma itself—(meaning the result of past actions in a previous life) all these I believe were outwitted by the force that is Mary Garden. They planned and devised a huge curse to follow through life this babe they called Mary. They planned to entice her, mislead her with a quiver full of great gifts—all the needed arsenal of a Grand-Opera singer: beauty, splendid health, a big brain, vivid imagination, some heart, some good business judgment, together with a visualizing sense of beauty astounding in its scope; also an interpretative grasp of music and poetry, illuminating and flash-like; also a nervous temperament keenly balanced, all tingling and glowing yet firmly leashed to a will that would not hesitate to handle Jove's own thunderbolts. All this they gave to Mary Garden; they headed her straight for the Grand-Opera stage, but one thing they withheld—a great voice.

In the prehistoric ooze of time it may have been that Mary Garden, in her "tadpole" days, disported herself in ways unheard of. Something terrible there must have been in her "far amphibious past" to have incurred a

curse so keenly, subtly, cruel. But mark you how this girl defied the gods. That *will* they gave her was a bit of themselves—they incautiously had flung to her a fragment oversize. "Watch me sing triumphantly in Grand Opera!" she gaily halloed to Olympus. "Watch me (don't listen)—just watch me!"

And bless you, this is what they all—both gods and men—are still doing. It is an interesting pastime, enlivening, thrilling, diversifying, breath-catching. "She is all flame and gold," says James Gibbons Huneker, her greatest admirer, but he then cautiously adds: "except when she sings above the staff."

"Her voice is harsh at times, even distressing," another critic has stated. In fact, she herself makes no claims as a singer—a touch of commendable frankness on her part that serves to emphasize her high mentality and consciousness of power—but we go to see her none the less and continue to acclaim her a Grand-Opera star.

Some one has said, "Mary Garden can not sing, but she certainly shrieks divinely." When she made her New York debut in "Thaïs" she felt called upon the next day to apologize; she made full confession to the press.

"Don't judge me by my singing. I know I haven't a Melba voice. And don't judge me by one performance. You will find my art consists in everything I do—my interpretation, expression, movements, costume—the *tout ensemble*. I know I sang badly last night; when I took my high notes my throat felt as tho a steel chain were binding it."

That's the way it sounded, Mary, that's the way it sounded! As an initial instance of this amazing, unprecedented power that is known as Mary Garden, let the fact be recorded that the newspapers humbly heeded her

apology. The critics ceased to carp and—as I stated before—gods and men have been watching her ever since. And Mary Garden has never failed to give them plenty to look at. She has never failed to fill their eyes with astonishment. I say this in no caustic spirit, for art should be astonishing—not purposely so, not with this aim in view, but because true art is always unconsciously original—unconsciously different.

As a good example of the subtle spell we succumb to when within the circle of Mary Garden's witchery, I recall my own feelings as I watched her in one of Hammerstein's venturesome presentations at the Manhattan. "Drusilda" was the name of the opera. I saw a moonlit setting of palace-grounds. I see it yet, with Mary Garden in clinging white, sinuating slowly down a sweeping curve of marble steps. I was entranced by the beauty of it all. Then suddenly with forethought and a purpose I gave myself a mental jerk; I assured myself that any shapely woman in clinging white could not help but appear divinely fair when descending that gleaming escalade enwrapt in the pale splendor of a well-adjusted moonlight. But later on in the scene another character, a woman, well-formed and also in trailing white, swayed slowly down that same stairway in that same impeccable moonlight. I watched most carefully this second dim descending figure and to my unforgettable amaze, tho all things else I found the same, the dream and the thrill were missing. Another time Mary Garden, scheduled to appear in "Louise," was suddenly indisposed; a well-known singer—a real singer with a real voice—was announced to take her place. I went to this performance all-rejoicing, my eyes agleam with unholy joy. Mary Garden's *Louise* was familiar to me; I had seen her in

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the part more than once, but this time—said I to myself—this time *Louise* will actually sing; I can listen at last to the music. I came forth from that performance a thoughtful and wiser woman. In all humility I was forced to admit that *Louise* had left me impassive, unmoved, whereas heretofore I had tingled and glowed with enthusiasm. There was something lacking—I can not say what—I only know that I missed the thrill that is Mary Garden.

I have said that her power at times is such as to be almost dangerous. It has in fact created a cult, an "ism." Her admirers grow dizzy with adulation. I have known some—not men—but maids and matrons, who made it a law unto themselves never to miss a Garden performance. They will verily leave all—even nursing babes—to acclaim the Mary they have set so high.

In the Garden gallery of resourceful ladies, who live to love and to prey, their sorcery is not depicted by the wonted play of heavy-lidded eyes—dark, deep and dangerous. These methods are old and commonplace. Mary Garden's art is a leaping flame, but her eyes are cold and gray, sharp-edged and rapier-like. Her face, too, lacks warmth of expression; there is something chiseled and hard about it. Her smile is cool and fleeting but luminous as sunlight on a glacier. And her voice—if we forgive the upper tones and consider only the middle range—her voice has an original tang to it that one learns to crave like forbidden fruit. It is a clear cool tone like her smile; there is timbre to it, and you feel in it also the hidden rapier neath any touch of tenderness that may be expressed.

Mary Garden is an American citizen born in Scotland of Scottish parents and trained in Paris. There you

have it! A juggling of elements that would cause any wide-awake guardian angel to fold her wings and think of Paradise Lost. There must still be a drop of Presbyterian Puritanism in Mary Garden's veins; not even Paris can entirely eradicate it. But in appearance and manner Mary Garden is utterly Parisienne, from the effusive perfume of her gold-tinted hair to the satin bottines in which she has wandered down the Elysian Fields to the Place of Concord and the Way of Peace. She is Paris itself. No wonder her whole being throbs in "Louise" when she exclaims—yes, shrieks—in climactic cadence—"Paris! Paris! Paris!"

She loves to enact rôles of Balzacian, bacchanalian flavor. Babylon, too, appeals to her, and the brazen beauty of Alexandria.

In her art she delights in defying all codes, and triumphing *quand même*. "Salome" was condemned, hissed and hushed into silence, until Mary Garden flamed upon us—white-armed, red-haired and tiger-eyed—in a robe of orange satin, snaky and long as the river Nile.

Thaïs is another one of her unmentionable ladies, tho in the end she does become converted—not without subterfuge however; she really ought not to have wandered off in the desert with *Sathanael*—any Presbyterian would tell you that. The list of these ladies in her repertoire is long. *Sappho* was one, a rôle wherein she was carried by the tenor, clinging and panting, up a flight of stairs. And *Gismonda* there was, too, and *Cleopatra*. Glory be! What a Cleopatra we saw! The Egyptian serpent could have learned from Garden, learned new tricks in the way of sinuous, ensnaring movements—the gliding approach and venomous dart.

But let us not forget that lurking strain of Puritanism,

that one little corpuscle in Mary's veins forever looking on with disapproval. To pacify this nagging little atom Mary discovered and presented with glee "The Juggler of Touraine." This rôle is Catholic, to be sure, but John Bunyan himself must have loved it for its precious purity: the pitiful little juggler who, to honor the Virgin, gives of his best—his dancing and circus-tricks—all alone before her shrine. And in this rôle—sans the charm of white flesh, flashing eyes, and sinuous femininity—Mary Garden again triumphed, by no other power that I can see than that same mysterious force—that urge of will—that forever carries her on.

Is it Nietzsche's "Will-to-do?"—An evidence of the Super-woman? This phrase has been applied to her more than once. Especially was it used when the Chicago Opera Company, threatened with disaster, was taken over by Mary Garden who announced her readiness to direct the whole thing herself. Whether she did actually fulfil all the duties of the harassed director or not—I don't know; but certain it is she held the post for a year, and did not lose flesh or nerve while doing it and at the same time appearing regularly as the Company's leading star.

I have reserved to the last all mention of her greatest achievement. I have often felt provoked at the doings of this American Mary—even anger—but all resentment is forgotten—I bow—and cry All Hail!—when I see her as *Mélisande*. A miracle of perfection is her presentation of this character—even her voice rings true in the part, so perfectly attuned that one feels that no other voice in the world would be fitting. It is not singing music; the voice-part is almost wholly *parlando*, wholly bare of high notes and coloratura. Whether Debussy knew it or not, the music of this rôle was certainly made for

that cool, clean voice, that middle register of the one and only Mary.

But the plot! Well, any one but Mary Garden would have said at once it was the one rôle she could not play. What! The mercurial Mary as the quiet, timid, mild *Mélisande!* It was unthinkable. But those who thought thus failed to reckon with that urging atom of Puritanism that ever and again clogs up the machinery of Mary Garden's mental workshop, which is mostly of French construction. The tender, unearthly *Mélisande* strangely appealed to this fire-flung super-woman. I feel like saying that she literally discovered and created the part. I doubt whether the composer or the poet, or the poet's wife who first sang the part, fully sensed all its meaning until Mary Garden gave it life. It is a rôle almost devoid of action or tensity, yet greater dramatic art—I believe—was never displayed than in the still gentleness of *Mélisande's* death-bed scene.

I am giving Mary Garden high praise; such is the strange, weird energy she wields. She has mighty gifts—I can not but recognize them. I have chronicled them truthfully. I must also chronicle her faults. Her disposition is rough at the edge and needs polishing.

This chapter—as you have noticed—is not an interview. Lay no blame on me for this fact. I wrote to Miss Garden two years ago and sent her a copy of the first edition of my book, for which I was asking the favor of an interview. No answer to this. I then sought the help of one who knew her personally—and for that matter knows all the great musicians of the world—Mr. James Francis Cooke, Editor of *The Étude.* He frankly told me that Miss Garden is "difficult," tho she does not mean to be so. He kindly wrote to her about

me—but he, too, was ignored. Then I called at the office of her general manager, and was told to see her personal manager when next she came to New York.

Thus, by degrees, was revealed to me the Himalayan altitude of Mary Garden. I had heretofore aspired no higher than the attainment of a brief *causerie* with the fixed Stars of the Metropolitan—a region where the supreme voices of the age make harmony divine. I realized now that I was striving for admittance to a Presence almost as remote and mighty as is that other American "Mary" to whom we submissively bow and pay tribute. To approach Mary Pickford, I am told, one must be passported through an advance guard of secretaries and managers that would quake the heart of a Pinkerton detective. But I still pursued my audacious dream. I bided my time till she came to New York, then I again sought her general manager. He curtly gave me the address of her personal manager, and told me to write to him. I did so and also sent by special messenger a second copy of "Stars of the Opera" to this meteoric "Mary." The next day I received a reply—crude and cold as the tones of "Thaïs": "Miss Garden regrets she can not give an interview." Just that—nothing more. Without beginning and without end—absolute and supreme—like the Order of Melchisedec.

So accustomed was I to meeting only courtesy and charm of manner in my interviews with Opera Stars, that I had come to associate these qualities with the career itself. And now I believe more than ever that courtesy is an integral part of every great singer's equipment; but—mark you—I say "singer," and I mean by this the possessor of a great voice. Tone-mastery is so mighty an art that I believe it entails self-mastery. We speak of the

artistic temperament, but let me assure you, this does not imply a luxurious giving away to temper. Such explosions are too damaging to the self-poise that a well-balanced tone-scale requires. When you meet a great singer with a world's wonder of a voice—a voice well-maintained and not harmed by indulgence—you meet one who has learned that geniality, kindness, graciousness and poise are as essential to saving one's voice as to saving one's soul.

But there is still hope for Mary Garden; she may yet swing into that zenith where the singing Stars hold straight and true to the high demands of their eminence. Mary Garden may yet really sing—may yet become sweet and gracious—for I read in a New York daily that she is following Coué—in an effort to improve "her health, her disposition, and her voice." Amen.

CHAPTER VI

"PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE"

STRANGE, mellifluous, faraway names these are, possessing in themselves a somnolent mysticism that suggests the stage-setting: dark, disconsolate forests, and a castle darker yet, with a crypt of absolute blackness. The action of this opera is all in accordance with some brooding fate that is heard and felt throughout the performance. It all occurs during the dark ages of the past, altho the time is not definitely stated, probably because symbolism fits all ages and this opera is gruesomely symbolic and fatalistic.

Pelléas and *Mélisande* are poor, pale puppets, unknowing that they are pulled by invisible strings all held in the hands of the Great Conductor who directs the music. The Belgian poet, Maeterlinck, was visualizing life itself, from a pessimistic viewpoint, when he wrote this dour tragedy. And there chanced to be one other man in the world with thoughts all akin to Maeterlinck's, but who traced his dreams in dots and quavers on a staff. This man was Claude Debussy. Never were author and composer more attuned to each other. The grim awfulness of life which Maeterlinck perceived, and pinioned to paper with piercing words, the strange unfettered spirit of Debussy heard in a clash of soul-wrenching tones which he too was master enough to capture. There are five acts in this drama; three scenes in each one, save the last, which makes thirteen in all—a fitting number.

The first scene is a forest where one might look to

find "the windy owl, wheeling his ghostly shadow to and fro with melancholy hooting." But we knew what to expect before the curtain rose. Such inundating desolation has never, that I know of, been so adequately put into music as is here done in this short prelude by Debussy. There are discords in it, firm and uncompromising, but you soon get addicted to them—either as a narcotic or a tonic, it is hard to say which. Certain it is that there is something about this composer's defiant discords that possess the tang of forbidden fruit. I am not sure but that it is a dissipation to hear Debussy.

But it is never a carouse, never strident or coarse; his discords may be brazen in their audacity, but they are always presented with a dull finish; all is softened and subdued; he never forgets the symbolism of it all. The music hangs like a mist over the whole opera; the plot, the words, are as a glint of diamonds in a fog, a gleam of gold neath quiet water. There is in that prelude the voice of Fate—a theme whose intervals are compassed by two tones, when reduced to its lowest analysis. This theme hovers all through the opera in all manner of rhythms and disguised harmonies (that is what discords really are, perhaps, in life as well as music). But you won't notice that wail of Fate in the prelude; one never does heed the first portentous warning. But it is there, plainly sounded like predestination, before the curtain rises.

It is also there when *Golaud,* who is lost on his way while hunting (we are all lost on our way hunting happiness), enters and begins to sing. He is an elderly man, a kindly man, the grandson of an aged King, well-reared and well-disposed, but none the less he serves, all unwitting, as dire fate to a maiden whom he presently perceives

recumbent by a pool. She is weeping. Two soft discords in the orchestra sound her gentle sobbing; the saddest, faintest discords—such gentle tears they are. *Golaud* steps forward to question and comfort this despairing loveliness, for she is very beautiful, very young; clad in a soft white robe, and a mantle (nothing else can describe it) of golden hair that reaches to her feet. A nymph in a cascade of gold she seems. She rises and starts to flee at sight of *Golaud*. A short phrase in the orchestra expresses her palpitating fear; a hesitant little phrase is this Fear-theme: it echoes around Mélisande throughout the whole opera; she is always afraid and shrinking. *Golaud* reassures her and she resumes her place, still weeping. His quiet words are sung in recitative. This opera is a fantasy of life, remember, so the characters in it do not sing songs; their voices merely follow their emotions, with varied uprisings, inflections and accents, all conforming to the orchestra, however; all carefully adjusted and minutely written out, every word to its own note, and every note on its proper beat, altho it be but a sixty-fourth grace note. But the dear, sad creatures on the stage are all unconscious—so it seems—that their impulsive utterings are not devised on the spur of the moment and of their own free will.

Golaud asks *Mélisande* how she came here. She does not know. Where did she come from? She does not know. She still weeps. He sees a glint of something in the pool and looks again; it is a crown! How came it there? It was *Mélisande's,* it seems, and she has lost it. But she does not wish him to try to regain it for her; she has no use for it now. *Golaud* is nonplussed at the strange creature. Right now deep in the orchestra may be heard a conspicuous sample of the whole-tone scale.

This pagan scale (Chinese, in point of fact) has been troubling the harmonies from the first and accounts for the astonishing discords and sequences. Composers heretofore have been very shy about toying with the whole-toned scale; the scarlet-woman of the staff. The hard-working practical major scale—we know her well, and the thoughtful melancholy minor is a *grande dame,* a veritable aristocrat; there is also the chipper, pert chromatic scale, intruding herself almost too often, but none the less admitted everywhere; then there is the pentatonic, a foreign creature, very attractive and frequently met with. But the whole-toned scale! Beware of her! She will lead you astray; her disregard of good form, of all laws and rules, make her quite impossible, I assure you. But Debussy does not care! He breaks the laws of harmony and welters at times in such a chaos of discord that when you come to a nice recognizable group of consecutive fifths you feel comparatively restful, in spite of the fact that you have been brought up to consider such groupings accursed. But Debussy found, and you will find too, something very enticing about this strange creature among scales. Broken laws have a fascination even in music. There is a languorous witchery to these insinuating discords; you gradually come to thirst for them and drink deep of their bittersweet potency. Yes, Debussy is a "dissipation"—no doubt of it.

So *Mélisande* is first presented to us as one alone in a great wilderness, unknowing whence she came, weeping and afraid. Just so are all poor souls ushered into existence merely to find themselves lost in a strange world. Like the smile of an infant in its sleep is that glint of a buried crown—a memory, a gleam of some supernal glory in the unknown realm from whence it came. And just

as we all do when ushered into life—so *Mélisande* accepts and clings to the first kindly hand extended toward her.

Golaud bids her follow him; he can not leave her helpless in the forest, tho he is lost himself. (What a grim glimpse of life!) And so this strange scene ends.

But not the music. Dark themes continue to be threaded back and forth in the orchestra. The conductor like a weaver at his loom carefully shades the intricate pattern in tones of royal purple, blood-red and black. We see only the back of the tapestry, till the curtain lifts again.

Much has been woven and reeled off since we last looked upon the living picture. Six months have passed. *Golaud* has sent a letter to his home. His mother is reading it to her father-in-law, old half-blind *King Arkel.* They are seated in an oriole window of the great grim castle. Here the light streams upon them and even ventures a bit further into the vaulted room, but it soon is lost among the tall arches and stone pillars. Very beautiful is this picture of the white-bearded monarch beside the stained-glass window listening to the letter from his grandson. *Princess Genevieve,* already gray herself but nobly gowned in medieval robes, reads in recitative contralto tones how *Golaud* has found the strange *Mélisande* and has married her and loves her, but now after six months he knows no more of her past than at first. But she is beautiful and good and will, he believes, care for his little son *Yniold* (*Golaud* has been married before). He writes now to announce his return and is hoping they will receive *Mélisande* as a daughter.

While the letter is being read *Pelléas* joins them; he is *Golaud's* young stepbrother. He is thinking of taking

a journey (he is always thinking of going away, just as we all are forever thinking of doing something different). His present reason for going is that a distant friend who is ill has just written begging to see him before he dies. But *King Arkel* disapproves of the project, for *Pelléas's* own father, it seems, is on a sick-bed (somewhere in this doleful castle) and filial duty should hold him here. Every mention of extraneous characters or events in this opera only adds another touch of pain. The unseen is all drear. The sick-room in the castle is several times referred to. (Every life has its sick-room, either in the home or in the heart.) So *Pelléas,* from a sense of duty, defers his journey. He means to do for the best; how can he know that he is doing for the worst. Still less does he know that he does as he does because it is so written in the book.

The curtain descends and only the themes in the orchestra creep forward and loom large, like shadows of coming events. There is the Fate-theme grim and ever present, and a lovely group of chords with never a thought of discord that first came to birth in the previous scene when *Golaud* observed to *Mélisande*—"How fair you are!" This theme appears in the present interim veiled in mournful minor. They face each other now—these two unequal themes; one forbidding and unmerciful—the other piteous and frail; its gentle harmony confronted by gnashing discords that suggest fierce lions roaring at a Christian martyr—thrown together for the sport of the gods. But not yet is the clash to be.

The curtain rises again showing the gloomy park of the castle with a glimpse of the sea in the distance, and we hear in the orchestra the frail, timid theme that first ushered in *Mélisande.* She enters with *Golaud's*

mother, *Princess Genevieve*. *Mélisande* is herself now a princess—*Golaud's* wife, and she wears beautiful garments and her hair sedately braided. But she is still shy and afraid, altho she shows this mostly by her quiet movements and few words. She feels lost in the great castle and equally lost in the surrounding forest. "How tall the trees are," she exclaims. They have come to this spot for a sight of the sea, an outlook, a bit of light. They are always noting the darkness and seeking the light in this opera. The whole human race is engulfed in blackness, according to Maeterlinck.

Mélisande has found some flowers on the way and lost no time in grasping them. Her arms are full. She is very quiet and very beautiful and resembles a carved image as she sits for a time immobile on a great stone bench. The orchestra, too, is very quiet; a somnolent reiteration of double thirds on the violin, with an occasional flitting by of *Mélisande's* Fear-theme.

Presently *Pelléas* joins them; they look out toward the harbor, see a ship sailing, talk of that and of a beacon-light in the distance and of the heat and the dark shadows and a possible storm. There is nothing else to see; nothing else to talk of in this gloomy life. Their words are trivial as our own, but their thoughts—! Turn you to the orchestra for them; in the great rhythms that surround them all that is hidden shall be revealed. There are fair harmonies without a discord in the orchestra when *Pelléas* draws near, and if you listen carefully—for the music is all soft and gentle—you will find the Fate-theme lurking about. Especially is this true when *Genevieve* goes away, leaving *Pelléas* to show *Mélisande* the road back to the castle. But it is very faint—that Fate-theme now, triple pianissimo and almost lost in the

ebb and flow of languorous double-thirds that lap and plash like sleepy wavelets upon the edge of Silence. With the close of this scene the first act ends.

The prelude to the second act introduces us to another scene in the gloomy park; the chief interest here centering about an old stone well or fountain. Like a bit of pale sunshine is the flickering violin passage that accompanies the entrance of *Pelléas* and *Mélisande*. This is one of the few passages in the music wherein the overhanging pall that oppresses the whole opera seems to lift for a brief moment. *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* are almost well acquainted now; quite brotherly and sisterly in deportment. He is showing her this retreat in the park where he frequently comes during the heat of the day. It is the noon hour now; the atmosphere is heavy; a sultry twang of the violins—double-third grace-notes that loll in the embrace of that languorous whole-toned scale—give a parching, heavy-lidded feel to the music. They are sounded very softly and only a few times, but there is something strange, tropical and unwholesome, about those plucked double-thirds; something quiet but dangerous like the old stone-well which entices *Mélisande*. *Pelléas* tells her it is called the "Well of the Blind," because it once had healing power for the sightless, but it is now abandoned and no longer potent.

Mélisande reclines on the parapet, reaches down her hand, tries to touch the water, tries to see the bottom. She is thoughtless as a child and for once almost unafraid; we do not hear her Fear-theme throughout this entire scene. Just when she should scent danger she loses all timidity. She is blind; they are both blind; but the old well can not heal. *Pelléas,* however, fears for her. He tells her to be careful in leaning over, for the

well is deep—"deep as the sea." He might have added that his love, too, is deep as the sea, altho he hardly knows this yet himself, poor lad. Only the music knows and shows it; so tender is the phrase that supports his words of caution and his speaking of her name. A moment later she is playing with her wedding-ring, tossing it up and down, seeing it sparkle in the sunlight. A child indeed she is, poised on the brink of disaster.

Pelléas again cautions her; the ring may fall into the well. It does so! The music, too, tumbles down an arpeggio from highest *G*-sharp to lowest *A*.

"Oh!" gasps *Mélisande,* very faintly. And in the orchestra there are twelve peals of a bell. The hour of doom has struck. But she does not know it, neither does *Pelléas.* They peer into the well but see no vestige of the ring. Too bad—what shall she tell *Golaud?* "The truth," wise *Pelléas* answers, and they try to make light of the whole occurrence. To lose a ring is no crime. They start home bravely; the pale sunlight-phrase in the orchestra again accompanies them. It is of sixteenth notes and almost merry, but above it sounds *Pelléas's* tender Fear-theme, and soon the grim Fate-theme wipes out all the sunshine.

There follows a scene in the castle, drear as usual. *Golaud* is reclining on a bed, slightly hurt from a hunting accident, and *Mélisande* is attending him. He is in a talkative mood and entertains himself by recounting the accident. It was so inexplicable: his horse suddenly shied and shot off like a flash—for no reason at all. They were nearing the castle; he had just counted the noon-hour strokes of the tower-bell. One would think the horse had seen something supernatural. What he really *had* seen or heard or felt is told in the orchestra; *Pelléas's*

delicate Fear-theme; the one that we heard around the stroke of twelve when *Mélisande* lost her wedding-ring, now flutters past like a fleeting thought. For him that hath ears—let him hear.

Golaud can not recall how he fell, or what happened, but he remembers there was a great weight upon his heart—he felt "as tho it were torn in two."

But he feels better now; no harm seems to have been done. He suddenly perceives that *Mélisande* is weeping quietly. He questions her in astonishment. She only answers she "is not happy."

Golaud means well and questions her kindly; is she sick? Has anyone hurt her? Is it his mother? Or *Pelléas,* perhaps? "He is reserved by nature and seldom speaks to anyone." "No," she answers through her tears, "*Pelléas* speaks to her when they meet."

Golaud is not attuned to the "wireless" memory now throbbing in the air, or he would know exactly *how Pelléas* speaks "when they meet." His tender Fear-theme (fear for her safety on the well-curb) is again wafted up from the instruments.

Good *Golaud* asks further, "Is there anything he can do?" "Is she lonely?" Perhaps that is it, *Mélisande* assents tearfully and quietly. The castle is so dark, she is unhappy here; "one never sees the sun—except to-day for the first time—a little bit." We hear that "little bit" in the orchestra; the light, shimmering phrase that accompanied her and *Pelléas* by the fountain.

Golaud tries to comfort her; he takes her hand. All tremolo and very faint is the music now; and good reason is there for this panting agitation.

Golaud soon notes the missing ring.

"Where is it?"

"It—it must have—fallen off."

"Where?"

Poor *Mélisande,* at no time very brilliant, now loses all her wits; some instinct to conceal the fact that she was with *Pelléas* in his favorite noon-hour retreat, prompts her to say that it must have fallen off when she was "with young *Yniold* this morning in the grotto by the sea."

Of course it chances that that particular ring, like Desdemona's handkerchief, is of untold worth. *Golaud* is very wrought up over the loss, altho not meaning to upbraid her, and he bids her go at once to find it; "the tide will rise to-night and carry it away. You must go at once."

She hesitates, is afraid to go alone, so he bids her take someone with her—"take *Pelléas.*"

She goes out weeping, repeating the pitiful wail, not uncommon to humanity—"I am so unhappy."

Faint flecks of the "sunlight" music are heard in the orchestra during the ensuing interim, but they are very dim, merely a memory. Many low trills and tremolos and rumbling double-thirds follow, and permeate the surrounding darkness (the lights are kept low during all the interims). But it is all very pianissimo. The Terror by Night is merely turning in his sleep.

The grotto by the sea is our next vision in this opera of many scenes—each one beautiful but brief, reminding us that life is but a broken strand of beads whose gems are slipping: "Pearl after pearl into the bowl of night."

The stage depicts the dark interior of the grotto; beyond, through its rocky arches, the pale-lit sea and sky are seen. Back of the open grotto, between it and the water, poor fate-tossed *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* are

seen. She has really never yet been inside the cavern but, since *Golaud* has sent her, *Pelléas* advises her to look in, so she can at least talk confidently about it when further questioned. They wait for the moon to emerge from a cloud; it will be light enough then to step inside. He holds her hand and bids her have no fear. Right now a foretaste of the love-music, that predominates in a later scene, floats across the orchestra like the passage of a dreamy swan on the surface of a quiet pool. In the meantime we see the pictured water and sky growing lighter and we hear a soft, restless, lapping repetand of thirds and fourths in the orchestra which grows steadily clearer and brighter—not louder, just more lucid. It is a ravishing effect; these swooning, softly brooding, unhallowed harmonies of the whole-tone scale caress you like the ripples of a moon-lit sea. But as they progress they ever and again splash into the radiant major; it is like a touch of phosphorescent light; ozone after poppy or mandragora. You breathe deeply but with that hush of the sleeper who is loth to awaken.

At last, when the moon fully emerges, there is a touch of the harp and some triumphant tremolos that bathe the world in glory.

Then a cry from *Mélisande* as she enters the cave; she is terrified by the sight of three old ragged men asleep on the ground. The moon falls full upon them. *Pelléas* soon solves the horror. In reassuring tones he explains:

"Just some paupers who have stopped here to rest; there's a famine in the land and one meets with such beggars everywhere."

There is beggary in the music now—all the sea-dream and the glory have departed; just single tones, low and

sad; *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* hasten out and leave the paupers still sleeping.

Were the paupers also puppets serving, all-unconscious, in their sleep to terrify the as yet unthinking lovers from the deep pools of danger in that cave? Are there two fates jerking at the motives of our lives? Maeterlinck does not know. He only knows what we ourselves know—*that the music still goes on.*

The opening scene of act III is the most memorable one in the opera; it centers about an open window in a tower of the castle; below is a path and a stone-seat and yew trees and willows. It is night and all things are white with moonlight. (The whole opera is drenched in moonlight, even the music.) The opening notes of this scene fairly drip with it—broken octaves on the strings—very pianissimo. Debussy is not original in this; it is the composer's stock device for moonlight.

But there is more light than the moon in this scene. *Mélisande* at the window is combing her amazing gold hair; hair that reaches to her feet. Its shimmering gold gleam is like a lamp at the casement. It is no exaggeration to say that this scene, indeed the whole opera, hangs on her wondrous golden hair. One may say that the first essential to the production of this opera is a *wig;* a fabulous, stupendous wig. Good voices may be dispensed with (they frequently are) and good looks, too (the opera is mostly in half light), but that wig of boundless beauty shares honors with the composer and poet.

There in the moonlight this Lorelei of the tower combs her hair and sings a song—a weird little snatch of a song—not loud and not long, but loud enough to be heard by the ears of love. *Pelléas* draws near to the wall beneath. He asks, "Who is singing like a bird in

the night?" They talk then, as undeclared lovers ever have, of the beautiful evening, the flowers and the stars; and all the time the music is softly bewitching them—entwining them in a web of opalescent harmonies. He tries to see her better, he begs her to lean forward; he is "going away to-morrow," she must let him kiss her hand for good-by; she refuses to reach down her hand unless he promises not to go. He stands on the stone-bench trying to reach her fingers, but the distance is too great. She leans far out and suddenly her hair falls down, inundating *Pelléas* in a shower of gold. The music, too, in a shower of fantastic chords, avalanches down the rocky declivities of the whole-tone scale; it is the only fortissimo passage in this act; in fact there is only one other in the opera.

The present high light of sound is temporary and subsides with *Pelléas's* astonishment, which gives away to raptures. He plays with the pendant tresses—kisses them—ties them about his neck—refuses to unclasp them, declares they come to him from on high; they have fallen from heaven—he "can no longer see heaven because of them." And the soft, mad music in the orchestra is radiant and misty with strange pale hues that melt into each other like colors on a crested wave. The conductor with his baton looms impressive as great Merlin, weaving weird enchantments about these unwitting lovers. Unearthly harmonies, the very "Wine of Wizardry," fill the brimming bowl of music that Debussy has here brewed for us. Airy bubbles of gleaming melodies float to the surface, scintillate for a moment, and dissolve in a burst of jewelled light; others follow, mounting up through the ruby depths to shimmer in glory for a moment. The depths themselves, if you peer deep down, are glowing

with strange life and unwonted colors. There are deep-sea mysteries in the undercurrents of Claude Debussy's quiet music; a necromancer of awful power is this nouveau-art French composer. He flings upon you, gently and unawares, unholy chords that well-nigh suffocate you with their unmistakable brimstone flavor. And then in a moment, by some undreamed of modulation, incense and attar-of-roses cloy you with their sweetness. This scene finds you, like *Pelléas* himself, enwrapped in a mesh of gold, drunk with strange harmonies, a dreamer adrift on a purple sea—North, East, South and West are no more—the boundaries of music have vanished!

Suddenly three doves flutter about the tower. There is a tremolo in the music; the white gleam of wings startles *Mélisande;* "You have frightened away my doves of the tower," she exclaims. "Leave me now, *Pelléas,* or they will never come back!"

Alas—something more than the doves has flown; peace—the peace of three lives—has taken wing.

Far down in the orchestra, so deeply buried that only those that seek shall find, are twelve slowly reverberating intonations. With the final, pulsing beat, *Golaud* suddenly appears on the scene. He is astonished, but still shapes his tones to kindness.

"What are you doing—playing like children? You are only a couple of children. You will catch cold, *Mélisande.* Go to bed. It is late. It is midnight."

Things always happen in this opera when the clock strikes twelve.

The Fate-theme stalks abroad again in the orchestra. It is the hour of tragedy and phantoms.

Scene II of this act is to the unthinking observer well nigh meaningless, both musically and dramatically. A

moment's thought, however, will make it vibrant with purpose. We see a subterranean vault among the dilapidated foundations of the castle. It is absolutely dark until the beams of a slowly penetrating lantern illumine the greenish coloring and miasmic vapors of the place. *Golaud* is showing *Pelléas* the dire spot, and at first you have visions of possible fratricide or the administering of some weird, awful oath at midnight. Not at all; it isn't midnight to begin with; it is the middle of a bright forenoon and honest *Golaud* is showing *Pelléas* these caverns for the most modern and human of reasons. In plain English—the plumbing of this royal castle is in bad shape; a good high-priced union man is needed! But the bright lexicon of Grand Opera knows no such word. The vast vaults need repairing and closing up; their condition has perhaps occasioned the sickness now in the house. This much *Golaud* knows and what we would call sewer-gas he euphemistically refers to as "the odor of death." He is merely showing his brother the existing condition as a preamble, we presume, to a discussion about needed expenditures. So much for the plain, materialistic meaning of the brief scene.

But true art dictates that one should see poetry in everything. A better instance you will never find of carrying out this mandate. Maeterlinck has here, with amazing mastery, unearthed poetry in a cesspool. Do not toss your head and turn away with contempt, as at something far-fetched and overdone. Take my word for it, the allegory of this depressing scene is one of the superb touches of the story. All life, according to Maeterlinck, is merely a tottering structure reared above the awful chasm of death. Now and then we contemplate the awfulness, go down into the depths, as *Golaud* and

Pelléas are here doing, and grow dizzy and helpless at the prospect. *Pelléas* nearly slips on the slimy rock, as he leans over to peer into the deep scum-covered pool.

Too much investigation into the black mystery that surrounds us is dangerous. *Golaud* and *Pelléas* hasten out again. As for the music! If we had our suspicions about the whole-tone scale before, those suspicions are now confirmed. All the scintillating witchery of its unholy sequences are now gone, and the blanched bones and naked soul of the creature are here disclosed, grovelling in the lowest of bass depths. All the discords of Hell seem to be gnawing at each other in that boiling caldron of cacophony. One key won't hold them. Debussy has diabolically turned loose two unrelated keys at once; some of the growling instruments play in one key, while others grumble in another. They seem to know that they are playing with the graves and ghosts of the accursed; therefore they play very softly and therefore this brief glimpse of purgatory is endurable. But the whole-tone scale! We know her now for what she is! Babylon the Great has fallen—she who lived deliciously, who in former scenes drew to herself, by means of ravishing harmonies, visions of "purple and fine linen, pearls and silver and precious stones, chariots and slaves and—the souls of men" is now forsaken and desolate—no longer clothed with chords of rainbow hue—she is sunken, fallen, to the lowest region of the staff. Stand afar off—for the fear of her torment! The music is now nothing but a deep tremolo and a gasp.

Pelléas and *Golaud* and the lantern disappear.

The scene shifts and a moment later we see them emerging, half-fainting, onto the terrace in front of the castle. The music has emerged likewise into the upper

air. Harp and piccolo and flute—sunshine, birds and ozone! And plain Christian harmonies; God bless them! If you have ever known purity of atmosphere after a storm; the gleam of a smile after tears; the joy of the condemned when proven innocent—then you can imagine the elixir in this ethereal music. The harps and strings are all aflutter like birds tossing raindrops from their wings, and over all sounds a bright pealing carillon, the tower-bells chiming the noon-hour. Ever and always the stroke of twelve! What means the ominous hour this time? Nothing much that we can discern. To be sure, on seeing *Mélisande* and *Genevieve* on the parapet of the tower, *Golaud* pauses to give *Pelléas* a bit of warning. All brotherly and kindly it is. He tells him to keep away from *Mélisande* as much as possible; he has noticed their growing fondness for each other—no harm in it so far, of course—but *Pelléas* is the elder of the two and wiser; it is his duty to avoid entangling *Mélisande's* untrained emotions. "She is but a child yet, altho in way of becoming a mother; any shock to her might be disastrous."

He says all this in few words; they are not weighted with any deep unusual meaning, yet still we have heard the noon-hour sounded, which merely means that our slightest speech or deed—the one we note the least—may be the turning-point of destiny.

As he refers to her impending motherhood, there is heard in the orchestra, a transformed version of the familiar little, timid, childish *Mélisande*-theme. It is now utterly sedate and prim. The two stumbling little eighth notes of the second beat are combed into line and file into place now as very methodical quarter notes, and the entire little company is now garbed in the gray uni-

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GARDEN AS "MÉLISANDE" IN "PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE"

form of minor chords. The battle of life is ahead of them—those erstwhile listless straggling notes of the *Mélisande*-theme.

Scene IV of the third act is as noteworthy as scene I. It is again the tower scene showing the window of *Mélisande's* room. A new character is introduced to us; the child *Yniold,* a boy of six or seven is led to the bench beneath the window by *Golaud,* his father. He, *Golaud,* has not forgotten that window, nor the scene he saw enacted there neath the moonlight recently. The serpent-bite of jealousy has stung deep. He is slow-going and well-meaning always, this elderly prince with the strange child-wife. His mind is a bit sluggish but not without resources. He has devised a scheme to learn the truth and perhaps, God willing, to quench the fires that torture him. He will question the child, who is fond of his stepmother and is often with her and *Pelléas.* He takes the boy on his lap. Poor *Golaud;* he might as well question the wind.

"What do little Mother and Uncle Pelléas talk of when together?"

"They talk of me."

"What do they say of you?"

"That I'll grow big."

"Do they never talk of me?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"What do they say of me?"

"They say I'll grow big like you."

Golaud tries another tack:

"Do they never send you away to play?"

"No, they're afraid."

"Afraid! How do you know they are afraid?"

"Because they cry—and that makes me cry too," the artless boy adds impressively.

It makes the music weep as well. The piteous wail in the orchestra is enough to call forth tears from the hearer.

Golaud, nearly suffocating from the pain in his heart, asks further:

"Do they never kiss each other?"

"Kiss?—no," the boy answers indifferently, but then corrects himself—"yes—once, when it was raining."

Even the heavens are weeping now—in the sad, soft sob of the violins that accompanies this story of the kiss.

"Tell me—tell me, how did they kiss?" asks the tortured man, always trying to subdue his tones to an air of indifference.

The boy is amused at this question, and promptly gives his father a childish kiss on the mouth.

"Like this, of course!"

This child's phrases—the chords that accompany them—are simple and of the utmost harmonic purity; discords and heart-pangs are unknown to him. They hover all about him however; the air is full of pain—of which he wots not.

A light presently appears in the tower window; the "little mother" has lit her lamp.

"Would you like to see her?" *Golaud* asks, a mad idea seizing upon him. "I will lift you up on my shoulders—but don't make a noise; it would frighten her."

So the unwitting boy is used as a spy to peer into the window which is beyond the father's reach.

"What do you see?" he cries softly. "Is little mother alone?"

"Yes—no; uncle Pelléas is there. Father, you hurt me!"

"Hush, speak softly," pleads the frantic man. "Tell me, what are they doing?"

"Just sitting there, looking at each other."

"Don't they speak or draw near to each other?"

"No, they say nothing; they don't move. Let me down, father. You hurt me."

The music hurts too; it is palpitant and still—subdued like *Golaud's* voice—but torn apart by the tones of an upreaching theme that is half submerged by the accompaniment through which it seems trying to extricate itself like a tortured dreamer endeavoring to awake. Higher and higher the struggling theme forces its way until it breaks loose and crashes against another theme that was first sounded when *Golaud* learned of that one kiss. It has grown strong now and strident, but *Mélisande* and *Pelléas* in the tower do not hear it, nor does *Yniold* have ears to hear. Poor, blind *Golaud* himself does not know that all the air is vibrant with his pain. We never know—we never know—how our inmost thoughts have set the universe a-quivering.

Things are stirring in the first scene of act IV, very stirring. The instrumental prelude, as the curtain rises on a hall in the castle, is genuinely animated; not energetic or virile, but alive and a bit hurried. *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* enter from different sides and meet. He has a hasty word with her, partly to tell her that his father is better this morning and now there is nothing to hinder him from going upon the postponed journey. Yes—he has decided to go. It is best; but he wants to see her alone before he leaves, just once alone. Will she meet

him to-night at the old fountain of the blind? At mention of this fountain we hear a faint flutter of the Sunshine-theme which accompanied them when they first met there. Will she meet him?

"Yes." *Mélisande* is always acquiescent; she is too timid and polite to say "no." There are no great reasoning spaces in *Mélisande's* brain.

Scarcely have the two parted, *Pelléas* going out and *Mélisande* remaining, when old *King Arkel* enters. He has a great deal to say in a kindly way. The recovery of *Pelléas's* father cheers the whole castle and *Arkel* hopes poor *Mélisande* will find things livelier now. He has pitied her these past months—a newcomer in this gloomy abode—the whole place hushed by the nearness of death. All that is passed now and she shall yet rejoice in youth and happiness.

A grim leer at life is all this on the part of Maeterlinck, for just when Death is supposed to have fled, just then he is lurking nearest. The old King does not note the flashes of discord that illumine the orchestral horizon like sudden forks of lightning. Apart from these the musical firmament is full of harmony and gentle tone-colors that soothe and caress. By these the kindly monarch is deceived. When Fate seems asleep—beware! There has been no hint of the Fate-theme lately, and the hour of twelve—it has ceased to sound. But when the caldron of calamity no longer boils—have a care lest the kettle has merely been lifted for its seething contents to be poured upon you.

The music has calmed down—mild as a grandfather's kiss—and then there is suddenly a touch of distraction. *Golaud* enters, in a mood that bears no tampering with. Three more peasants have lately died of starvation.

"They seem to expire purposely in sight of the castle." This is the reason he gives for his temper. He calls for his sword. *Mélisande* hands it to him meekly—too meekly! Why does she look at him like that? He is not going to kill her! Does she imagine he has discovered anything? Thus he rails at her.

Mélisande, like a timid forest creature when startled or alarmed, merely stands immobile.

"Don't look at me like that," he yells. "Do you see those eyes, grandfather?"

"I see a great innocency in them," the old man replies.

At this *Golaud* loses all control of himself.

"Innocent! So innocent that God himself could take lessons from them! So liquid pure that one would think the angels of Heaven were forever baptizing themselves therein! Oh, they are wonderful eyes! Close them!" he shouts. "Keep them shut—or I'll close them for you!"

He suddenly grabs her by the hair; those long braided strands fill him with fury as he recalls the scene at the tower-window.

"To your knees," he shrieks, as he throws her down, still holding her hair. "Your long golden hair shall be of some use for once!"

He yanks her back and forth by the golden strands. This of course is all symbolical of our own hapless struggles in the hands of relentless Fate.

In the orchestra *Golaud's* theme of jealousy, first met with in the preceding act, is tortured and banged about quite as mercilessly as *Mélisande* is on the stage. There is a fling of scale, or an accented chord, with every jerk of her hair. The grandfather looks on for some time in quiet amazement, evidently swayed by the prevailing

sentiment of the period which allowed a gentleman to use his own methods in managing his wife. But he finally steps forward with an admonishing word—and *Golaud* suddenly stops the athletics. He laughs piteously and assures *Mélisande* amid his half-crazed "ha-ha" that her actions really do not concern him; he is too old to care.

His own age and her youth are evidently a sore point with him. He goes out, while *Mélisande* repeats her erstwhile wail:

"I am so unhappy."

The ensuing intermezzo is of compelling energy and ablaze with meaning . It is set like a signal light to warn of coming danger. The Fate-theme gleams in all directions; its piercing vibrations shoot out from every corner of the orchestra. The glowing theme is flashed forth in all possible ways, reflected into a blinding glare by the orchestral brass. It is frantically flung hither and thither by the agitated conductor whose struggles with the on-rushing harmonies suggest a hero battling with the elements. His baton seems a flaring torch waved back and forth to ward off impending catastrophe. The night is dark and he has seen, and we have seen, two frail drifting barks headed toward the rocks. Will they note the signals—will they heed them?

We are not long left in doubt. The Fountain of the Blind is a fitting spot for the last meeting-place of *Pelléas* and *Mélisande*. For they are blind—utterly blind—and the fountain holds no healing for them. The fountain is dead and deep; the tall black yew trees are funereal and the white still light of a full-orbed moon is spread upon the scene like a winding-sheet.

Pelléas enters first and then *Mélisande*—she is out of

breath and hurried. She is late because *Golaud* was slow in going to sleep; he had a nightmare. And then in her haste, as she left the house, her gown caught on a thorn-bush and was torn. All nature, you see, has been striving to hold back these hapless lovers; even the kindly thorn-tree extending a detaining hand—and the music all about them! If only they would listen—give ear and heed. There is wailing in the music like the sigh of lost souls! And the Fate-theme ever and always in every wind that blows—in the twitter of the night-birds—in the rustle of the trees. Did they but have ears to hear—those dark dire tones are ever whispering at them, striving to be heard. After all it may be that this opera is not merely a picture of pessimism; perhaps it is a preachment, an admonishment, that we all should listen more earnestly to the ever-present still small voice.

But there are so many other voices! A sultry twang of plucked double-thirds reminds *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* of their first meeting at this fountain, in the heat of noon-day. Now they are meeting for the last time—to say good-by, and to say—"I love you."

They say it softly; the instruments are hushed—not a breeze, not a moonbeam quivers—the director's baton is well-nigh suspended. Then very faintly we hear a reminiscent chord or two echoing the troubled harmonies so lately sounded, but so low and pianissimo now as to suggest merely a regretful sigh on the lips of one of the watching Norn-maidens as she reaches for her shears. Then Debussy softly modulates with one sweep of the harp his indefinite dark gray chords of sullen minor into a flashing glory of mellow major that engulfs all the senses in a rapture of beauty. There is something ever and always of the elixir of youth in the transition from

minor to major. Perhaps if the thrill of it could be prolonged, old age would melt into a shadow. Debussy has here made a good semblance of prolonging the ecstasy—by the sheer power of the crystalline harmony which upholds his dream-laden melody. After the bitter and gall that preceded it, this goblet of joy goes whirling to the brain and singing to the heart. But there is no longer hope for poor *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* once they have drunk of its delirium. *Pelléas* is deaf to the Fate-theme; he only hears the tones of *Mélisande's* voice. He does not heed the waning moon; he only notes the light in her eyes. Time and the world are annihilated. So be it!

A grinding burst of chords in the orchestra announces the closing of the castle gates—the clanking of the drawbridge as the hour of midnight sounds. So be it. Too late now—all is lost.

"No—all is won!" cries *Pelléas,* clasping *Mélisande* in his arms, while the mounting madness of the music, sweeping onward like a tidal wave, discovers strange unearthly harmonies never heard on sea or land. Then suddenly with a necromancy all his own Debussy has this foaming crest of tortured minor slip all unaware into that melting major theme of love.

All of Debussy's themes have the power of appearing in many guises; a raised note here, a suspended one in the bass, an altered rhythm—and behold an entirely new color to the strange creature. So varying and overpowering is the subtle quiet power of this love-theme, as it slowly uncoils its way into prominence, that you can see in it the enticing potency of a basilisk; it is the serpent in the garden of Eden.

The lovers have kissed; their lips have tasted of the

fruit that for the moment seems indeed to make them as gods.

Then a shadow mars the brightness—a veritable shadow, which *Mélisande* sees.

"There is some one behind us," she exclaims in awe-hushed tones.

Golaud—the symbol of Fate throughout the entire opera—has followed the lovers.

Very awful are the ensuing moments. *Pelléas* is unarmed, there is nothing for him but death—death and one last kiss, which he takes in spite of Fate, while in the orchestra the love-theme—now a veritable wine of oblivion—is poured forth in a splendor of chords that proclaim in one crash of terrible beauty that the golden bowl is broken.

At that instant *Golaud* emerges, passion-blinded; his sword with one blow fells his brother, and *Mélisande* rushes shrieking into the forest.

Then with demoniacal joy the Fate-theme comes forth into the open, without a shred of either concord or discord to cover its nakedness; it bobs up in the orchestra, ugly and awful, like a leering imp a-squat on a toadstool.

Act V has only one scene; a bedroom in the castle. *Mélisande* lies before us; her golden hair upon the pillow, the one high light in the room.

Pale death is in the orchestra; a sequence of single tones on the strings that suggest a world-weariness only the dying can know. Old *King Arkel* is present and the physician; he shakes his head as he looks at the sick-bed; *Golaud* is seated in a corner depressed and bowed with remorse. There is also one other person present; in a crib by the bed lies a new-born babe.

In the midst of death there is life.

The doctor and old *Arkel* try to comfort *Golaud* who believes he has not only sent *Pelléas* to his grave, but is also the cause of the present grim catastrophe of life and death.

Mélisande awakens feebly and asks for more light; when *Arkel* opens the window she notes the setting sun. Maeterlinck, you see, has done with the stroke of twelve. All interest now is centered in the passing day.

The sick woman recognizes *Arkel.* (It is her first conscious moment since her illness.) She asks *Arkel* who else is in the room. Poor *Golaud* creeps forward praying for recognition. He has been panting for this hour to come. She speaks his name gently, without a quiver of pain at the memory. The reason for this is made plain by the music, which gives us something of the prescience of Omnipotence; we can discern the thought behind the words. Music can reveal what words conceal. Among the tender, simple harmonies that accompany *Mélisande's* voice lurks a theme that hovered about *Golaud* when first they met in the forest far away—and long ago. Her thoughts are there—not here. But *Golaud* does not sense this; he only knows that she is conscious, and may now be able to answer the question that burns his soul asunder.

He sends everyone from the room and then, on his knees, begs her first to forgive him. Her answers are as distraught as were poor little *Yniold's* when the frantic father tried to elicit words that might quiet his jealousy.

Mélisande forgives *Golaud* sweetly and promptly:

"Of course; what is there to forgive?"

Still the tortured man plunges on with his questioning:

"Tell me *Mélisande*—tell me—did you love *Pelléas?*"

She answers promptly and all innocently, "Yes, I loved *Pelléas.* Where is he?"

The memory softly sounded in the orchestra now is that of her first happy meeting with *Pelléas* at the fountain in the noon-hour long ago.

Golaud is writhing in an agony of remorse; an agony that is sounded in the orchestra like a prayer shrieked from Hades, sweltering in a boiling sea of discords, pressed down by a weight of darkness and obscurity.

"Mélisande," he cries, "tell me, was it a guilty love? Yes—only say yes!"

And out of the chaos in the orchestra sounds his one hope—a memory of the love-theme, of the kiss he saw—that last kiss. If it was but the kiss of innocence then his killing of *Pelléas* was *not* just revenge but foul murder. Therefore he prays that her answer be "yes."

She hears him plainly and answers distinctly and always so gently:

"We were not either of us guilty. Why do you ask that?"

In the orchestra we hear her thoughts still clinging to the gracious kindly theme of *Pelléas's* first regard for her long ago—in the noon-hour.

Poor *Golaud* groans and begs for *the truth*—"the truth as from the dying."

"The dying! Who is dying?" she asks quite disinterestedly and in a far-away voice.

Golaud, frightened at the harm his useless questions may have done, summons the others into the room.

He knows now—that he will *never know,* which all means, perhaps, that Fate is forever blind—for *Goloud* represents Fate.

Arkel speaks to *Mélisande* again and asks if she will not look at her child?

"What child?" the dying woman asks.

"Your little daughter," answers *Arkel.* He holds the child for her to see, while a new faint theme is heard in the orchestra. *Mélisande* leans over to look at the babe and observes:

"It is so little; it is going to weep; I am sorry for it."

As she lies back again, the maid-servants of the castle, all robed in black, softly file into the room. *Golaud* wonders why they have come; *Arkel,* too, is surprized—who summoned them? No one. This is all a mystic touch reminiscent of Maeterlinck's playlet, "The Intruder." Death announces his coming in mysterious ways. The maids have come, and the maids kneel in prayer, altho no one has told them that death has entered. *Golaud* turns to the bed; the face on the pillow is white, the mouth has fallen open. *Golaud* calls out despairingly—"Mélisande!" He longs yet to speak to her; *Arkel* hushes him.

"We should speak in whispers now; we must disturb her no more, for the soul is a creature of silence."

There are high pianissimo chords among the strings now, pure in harmony and floating in the air like random snow-flakes a-gleam in the moonlight. Softly veiled by their misty loveliness, the soul of *Mélisande* is wafted Heavenward.

The doctor gives a signal that she is gone.

"She has gone without telling me," poor *Golaud* sobs; and then *Arkel,* the sage, tries to comfort. He tells him it was not his fault, "altho it all is dreadful." The Fate-theme never misses a cue; it proclaims itself promptly and confidently at this word, "dreadful."

Then *Arkel* turns toward the white figure on the bed.

"She was aye such a quiet little creature—timid and silent; a lonely little, sad, mysterious being—as we all are."

The soul of *Mélisande* still hovers near in the music; the fragmentary bits of themes that made up her small life are here touched upon in the orchestra; she seems still present in spirit.

"We must go now," urges *Arkel,* "and take the child with us; it must live on and replace her. 'Tis the turn of the poor little creature. Such is life."

And the music softly sobs into silence—the lights melt into dimness, and all is over.

CHAPTER VII

A MORNING CALL ON FRIEDA HEMPEL

THERE is ever the thrill of adventure in breaking through the ramparts that hedge a prima donna. The authorities below stairs always eye you with interest when in spite of their Cerberean attitude word comes from on high that you are granted admittance. From that moment you feel their brains energized into action, busy wondering who you are, tho still firmly fixed in the conviction that you are a woman of no importance—this for the excellent reason that your name is unknown to them. Trust every bell-boy magnifico and elevator magnate, where a prima donna dwells, to master at once the complete list of Metropolitan singers, and to acquire a tripping—if not a tipping—familiarity with the size of their salaries Therefore, if unknown to them as either a singer or a society nabob, you are promptly relegated to the mob of mediocrity—a manicurist perhaps, or a dressmaker, or a composer. But this time I had an experience quite refreshing and jolly; I was no longer classed among the commonplace—I was suspicioned as a burglar. The front door dignitary had passed me on to the telephone nymph who in turn had handed me over to the judicious mercy of the madonna of the elevator. She took me half-way up, then—changing her mind—took me down again to make sure she had heard aright and that I was not breaking in unlawfully.

But, bless you, I could not blame her. On that day all

the newspapers were headlining a $50,000 robbery from Frieda Hempel's apartment. It was no press-agent fantasy; Madame Hempel is much too busy and tired to indulge in dramatics when not on the stage. She had been plundered of her most prized possessions—jewels famous for their association as well as their worth. Equally upsetting was the loss of most of her personal apparel.

"You can't imagine how maddening is the thought of some one ransacking your sleeping-room—your private belongings." She was full up of the subject and could hardly speak of anything else.

"I am really unstrung; I did not close my eyes last night—please pardon my nervousness."

I found myself suddenly aroused to a Freudian interest in noting how a prima donna deports herself when "unstrung." I even hoped for a glimpse of the temperamental lightning which we are told keeps the atmosphere phosphorescent back-stage of the Metropolitan.

There was plenty of bric-a-brac in her reception room and a tiled floor to break it on, but all that I saw was still intact.

Madame Hempel's blonde hair was simply arranged and revealed no evidence of frantic fingers run through it. In her bearing there was no sign of restlessness; no meaningless toss of the hand or tap of the heel. I pursued my pathological observations by asking whether she was ever nervous when she sings.

Frieda Hempel's answer was astonishing:

"Terribly nervous—always nervous—*and I hope I always will be!*"

Noting my surprize, she continued: "If I lost my nervousness, I should know I was becoming indifferent.

To be an artist one must be keenly sensitive and high-strung. I am so anxious and nervous sometimes that my hands are like ice and my knees shake."

Yet, in spite of this fact, let me say right here that no figure of more poise ever appeared on the stage than Frieda Hempel in her famed song recitals. Madame Hempel is one of the few Grand-Opera singers who, emulating the great Sembrich, can challenge the world as a Lieder-singer. This is a term that means more than its dictionary definition; it implies a mastery of Bel Canto. This too is a term with an illusive import other than its literal translation. Through years of studio jargon and general acceptance Bel Canto has come to mean a perfect legato. If you know not the meaning of legato in singing—then haste you at once to hear Frieda Hempel sing Mozart, and mark how the notes are joined together without slurring; each one so perfectly melted into the next that it is all like a stream of pure gold poured into a delicate mold. To sing thus one must not only have a rare voice and rare musical insight, but also the trained ability to maintain these at will and in spite of quaking nerves—; a perfect balance of tone and spirit.

This attainment is a high reach in self-mastery; it is something I bow to—for self-mastery is God-like, tho by no means God-given. It comes only from long habit in doing the thing you do not feel like doing; forcing yourself to it at the appointed time even tho no other necessity requires it than the necessity of keeping faith with yourself.

"I practise every morning of my life, as regularly as I eat my breakfast. Even when I travel I never omit doing at least one hour of vocalizing."

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FRIEDA HEMPEL

Remember this does not include the study of new music—memorizing, phrasing, and so forth; it means merely the work required to keep the vocal mechanism responsive to command after it already has been perfected by years of persistent work.

But the true artist is never satisfied. Tho the public applaud and critics acclaim, the true artist still aspires. It is his or her mission to *discover,* to blaze trails, to find new regions of light. Madame Hempel has done this. When she came to us at the Metropolitan she was already a radiant singer with a flexible voice, sweet, clear, and reliable; her first tone always sure and pure as her last. She came with a coloratura equipment that could compass with a smile and no effort the opulent splendor of decoration Meyerbeer has given to his "Queen of Valois" and Mozart to his "Queen of the Night." But colorature was by no means her only realm. She created here the rôle of the *Marchese* in Strauss's "Rosenkavalier"—an opera unadorned by trill or roulade from the first page to the last of its polyphonic pageantry. Astonishingly varied are the seventy-four operas in which Madame Hempel has appeared. From Verdi to Wagner is a far field. Clad as a nyad afloat on the river that guards the Nibelung gold, she has flung forth her voice in the wooing wonder of the Rheindaughter's Song in "Götterdämmerung." The next night on the same stage we find her afloat in the firmament (no allegory—this is literal) clothed in a web of night and stars and some tulle, singing to high heaven the scintillating music of *Astrofiamente* in Mozart's "Magic Flute." What more could one long for? Frieda Hempel herself probably did not know what she still was striving for, but the unceasing urge of the artist kept her at it. However, we know now

what it was that Frieda Hempel dimly dreamed of; in recent years she has cast upon her voice a new tone-quality. The general public may hardly know what it is she has done, but they fill Carnegie Hall to hear her; fill it many times through the season, and this, I can not recall their ever doing so persistently except in the days of the glory that was Sembrich.

Frieda Hempel has of late flashed over her tones a mirror-like quality, smooth, glistening, and aglow with reflections. To hear Hempel sing songs in this year of Grace, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-four, is to hear Peace on Earth, the Benediction of Repose, and the joyous rapture of absolute tonal beauty.

One reads of prima donnas doing dreadful things—indulging in giddy suppers, and even in an occasional divorce. It may be they do—it may be—I don't know; but I think it always well to note carefully the color of the paper that prints such reports, and also to consider the rank of the singer referred to. In the whole world there is seldom, at one time, more than ten or a dozen of these super Grand-Opera stars. I may be too worshipful in my admiration of their achievements, but I stoutly maintain that it is better to admire too much than too little. I also maintain that to keep one's voice for many years at its best—one's mind ever clear and one's body ever supple—requires an amount of discipline that leaves little time or energy for the ignoble or frivolous. They have a mission, these mighty singers; each one guards a chalice of song, a gift God intended to be cherished and used to pour forth upon a parching world the life-giving wine of melody. Each one of the elect—remember there are few of them—each one finds her destiny demanding a life of sacrifice and hard restrictions; restrictions as

rigid as those that bind the life of a cloistered recluse who guards the flame of an altar. There is this difference however: the singer endures a perpetual fear of failing in her efforts; the flame she feeds may flicker and fade even as she holds it up in the presence of the pulsing multitude. Let this once occur—just once—and that instant perdition falls upon her. As a recompense for this unending alarm she receives—so long as the flame burns bright—a sustaining wave of applause. The recluse at the altar has none of this applause, but neither has he the abiding terror.

"It is a life of sacrifice from first to last." Madame Hempel is speaking. "But the public never believes this. They imagine us enjoying midnight suppers, bathing in champagne, and generally carousing. I assure you we are busy every minute, and have time for nothing but work."

In words even blunter than these Geraldine Farrar once stated to me the same fact.

"It's a dog's life; I intend to get out of it when I'm forty." And she did.

One demand upon their time, seldom thought of, is that required to be decently courteous—just half-way polite—to the would-be composers who send their work for commendation, or a possible public hearing. Unending is the shower of these manuscripts, descending upon the hapless prima donna. They arrive by each mail, and by personal presentation; every friend has a friend who composes. A famed opera-singer comes at last to believe that the rest of the world never sleeps but sits up all night writing music. "And *such* music!" Madame Hempel threw up her hands. "It is amazing what manner of compositions people send me; the scribbled stuff

they call music! I assure you my cook could do better than some of them."

This indictment is not so damaging as it sounds, for Madame's cook, be it known, is a character, both capable and versatile; if she chose to write music she doubtless would devise something worth looking at—at least once.

All this I know because I happen to have a friend who is an intimate friend of the family. (If only that telephone damsel had known this!)

To this friend I am also indebted for a favorite phrase of the Diva's, one that habitually falls from her lips in life's most stressful moments—even during the hurricane upheaval of packing a dozen trunks the day before sailing for a European tour; a day when all is confusion, when music gets mislaid, costumes mixed up, the telephone rings steadily, and ultimate chaos seems imminent; even in such hours of trial Frieda Hempel's quiet voice will be heard admonishing all about her:

"Don't worry—don't hurry; it will all come out right." A good working philosophy this, to keep by one.

May be I am something of a burglar after all, having picked up this sentence sans her knowledge! But none the less I feel justified in using it, for it tells a great deal about her; it definitely expresses the *real Frieda Hempel.*

CHAPTER VIII

"THE MAGIC FLUTE"

MOZART'S first big success as a Grand Opera composer was achieved in his fifteenth year, and this, mind you, after four previous operas of less acclaim had helped to make him famous.

Some time, when you are fifteen, suppose you try writing an opera; see whether you have the patience to put down the notes, to say nothing of the genius to think of them. If anyone doubts the statement of Mozart's age when "Lucia Silla" was produced in Milan, let him but read the letter young Wolfgang wrote to his sister in Salzburg the day before the first rehearsal. The rattling buoyancy of this dashed-off missive, its bubbling nonsense, is a veritable school-boy shout. He even turned the paper when writing it and penned every other line upside down!

"When this reaches you, my dear sister, my opera will be in rehearsal. Just try and imagine that my dear sister hears it also. But I beg of you, don't say a syllable about it or too many people would come crowding in. . . . To-morrow we dine with Herr von Mayer—and do you know why? Guess! Because he invited us! . . . The rehearsal to-morrow is to be in the theater.

"Apropos—do you know what happened here? I will relate it. We were coming straight home from Count Firmani's and when we entered our street we opened our door—and what do you think happened? We went in! Good-by, my Pet,

"Your unworthy Frater."

It was in Vienna a score of years later that Mozart penned into place the final chord of his last and greatest opera—"The Magic Flute"—his spirit still radiant and child-like as when he so merrily exulted over his first finale. We know this from the music pealed forth by his "Magic Flute"; it is soul-moving, it has depth, it has star-reaching heights of beauty, but it has, too, simplicity and abounding joy. We can imagine him writing in much the same vein to "Nannërl" the day before his Magic Opus blew into being.

But not the day after. The Viennese, alas! did not shout and halloo loud "Bravos" over this his masterpiece. "Lucia Silla" was an instant success—and is now forgotten. "Il Flauto Magico" was a failure, and is now immortal. Only the discerning ones—standing high themselves on the peaks of genius—only these were uplifted enough to perceive the glory. Beethoven pronounced this opera to be Mozart's greatest.

But be assured Beethoven was not referring to the plot. No one ever speaks of the story of "The Magic Flute" without a twisted expression of countenance that implies puzzled ignorance or frank ridicule. In fact one so often hears of the absurdity and senseless intricacy of "The Magic Flute" that to tackle the dissecting of it requires some courage. There is even an awful rumor to the effect that a close scrutiny of the subject will disclose hidden symbols and mystic teachings of Freemasonry. This in itself is enough to keep the entire present-day operatic public from studying the libretto. No one wishes to mix his music with Masonry, however free it may be.

So with moods and misgivings much similar to those depicted when *Childe Roland* to the Dark Tower came,

I took my courage in hand and pressed forward. But on coming close up to the scary thing I find that like many other bogys of grim repute this, too, is made of pasteboard. In the first place I find that, if you get the right viewpoint, it is not a bad plot after all—if you like that sort of a plot. And furthermore I find, and hereby proclaim, that the chief reason for its maddening confusion is the senseless similarity of names given to the principal characters. Imagine the average opera-goer who scurries through his libretto before the curtain rises and while late-comers are apologizing their way past him, and his opera-glass and program are intermittently requiring rescue—imagine him trying to remember that *Tamino* is the hero and *Pamina* the heroine. (They are merely "Pam" and "Tam" in the libretto.) Even if he is superhuman enough to master this distinction, he will surely submerge under the strain of disassociating the next two principal characters who are lightly named *Papageno* and *Papagena.*

A more lengthy and ponderous list of characters has never that I know of been perpetrated in Grand Opera. Such a pomposity of nomenclature would be enough to kill any art-work were it not kept alive by the music of Mozart. Let me throw these names at you at once and be done with it. If you get used to them early, you may learn to like them. Aside from the four I have mentioned there is *Sarastro, Astrafiamente, Monostatos, Aretusa, Iperatusa*—besides several "Genie," "Sarcedotti," "Oratori" and "Armed Men." (These last are designated as "First and Second Uomo Armato.") All these besides the chorus. No wonder the poor libretto is all top-heavy with names. Even the list of those who *claim* to have written it, is one of considerable weight.

Of these claimants the two most prominent are Herr Schickaneder and Herr Giesecke. They hated each other, and fought it out by chewing and clawing at that libretto—in point of fact the thing was built up like a modern "movie"—half a dozen, or half a hundred had a hand in it, more or less. No wonder poor Mozart never lived to write another opera. The various readjustments he was requested to make in tuning up this Magic Flute were enough to drive him mad. The first requirement, it seems, was to evolve something scenic—an opera full of sprites and dragons and weird enchantments; this because the manager, Herr Schickaneder, happened to have a fine assortment of Christmas pantomime stuff on hand and wanted to use it, and furthermore because a recent "magic" opera at another theater had proved a great success. And finally, and still furthermore, the genial manager himself was an actor and singer with a talent for the grotesque. So he demanded a comedy rôle in the opera, with lots of lively arias—the more the better. But this does not mean that he wanted a comic opera. No, no—he wanted a serious opera—you understand—with a high, deep motive, but through it all a steady play of comedy. He finally proposed writing this part of the libretto himself. He did so, devising enough doggerel to keep him conspicuous on the stage for about eight hours running. He was polite and concessive however about cutting this down, but he still saw to it that his rôle of *Papageno* ("geno," not "gena") had as much to do as the hero—and *more* in the matter of solos.

From Herr Schickaneder's point of view the libretto was now fairly mapped out and ready for the composer's magic pen. His own comedy part was completed and

the rest he had roughly noted down—something like this:

"Have the leading soprano play the *Queen of Night*—black tulle and spangles, you know." This moon-lady part appealed to Mozart. Her music should be a perfect star-dust of staccatos and high notes; he would outdo Weber's "Titania."

Schickaneder's plot-synopsis further stated that the *Queen of Night* should have a beautiful daughter who is stolen from her mother by a mighty magician who keeps the girl guarded in his castle. Then a prince, the hero, rescues her.

Just as Herr Schickaneder had achieved this noble climax to his plot there arose, in Vienna, a great hubbub over Freemasonry. Maria Theresa had issued an edict abolishing the Order, whereupon its followers, suddenly banned, became legion. Now there was only one thing in the world that Herr Schickaneder desired more than prominence for himself on the stage—and that was prosperity for himself in the box-office. It occurred to him that quotations and ideas culled from Freemasonry, but intelligible only to the initiate, might draw all of the proscribed to the performances. (The idea of leaving the opera's drawing power somewhat to the music of Mozart, seems never to have occurred to him.) But this Freemason decoy scheme appealed to him mightily and so stirred him to action that he flourished his pen like a juggler's wand and evoked a startling transformation to his plot. The evil magician he changed to a benign Priest of Wisdom, a regular Zoroaster, who steals the Queen's daughter to protect her—from her mother! The star-spangled lady—no longer aglow with maternal instincts—is metamorphosed into a Spirit of Evil. The

great point achieved by this arrangement is Sarastro, the High Priest, a character properly fitted to sing forth vast quantities of noble lore and precepts culled from the proscribed cult.

Having devised this much of a muddle, Herr Schickaneder considered himself entitled to a place on the front page as librettist. After attending to this little matter he applied to Herr Giesecke to do the hack-work of making singable rhymes and supplying the Freemason stuff. How many other scribes Herr Giesecke himself summoned for help is not stated; possibly Herr Schachtner—another gentleman of sibilant name—lent assistance. He was one of Mozart's earlier collaborators.

But we must not be too hard on these gentlemen. The writing of a libretto, even without the involvement of Church and State, was no easy matter. The gifted Da Ponte who worded and rimed Mozart's "Don Giovanni," has wittily described, in one of his letters, some of the trying exactions of the task. He says: "For good or ill I managed at last to finish almost the entire first act. There remained yet the Finale. In this Finale it is the dogma of theatrical theology that all the singers should appear on the stage even tho there were three hundred of them—by ones, by twos, by threes, by sixes, by tens, by sixtys—to sing solos, duets, trios, sextets, septets; and if the plot of the play does not allow of it the poet must find some way of making the plot allow of it, in defiance of his better judgment, of his reason, or of all the Aristotles on earth. And if he then finds his play going badly, so much the worse for him."

When "The Magic Flute" libretto was finally scissored into shape and pasted together, it was handed over to one who needed no advice or suggestions for his part of

the work. To write music around the words and then, as a little afterthought, to clap on an overture seems to have been a slight task compared to the brewing of the book.

The overture is always written last because it reflects or presages the themes and mood of the opera, and even a Mozart can not know beforehand what his themes and rhythms will be. So "The Magic Flute" overture was written just two days before the opening performance. But listen carefully to that overture. You will learn from it what genius can do with the slightest material. There are in it just two themes: very obvious, simple and ingratiating, innocent little themes. Mozart applies to these the most conventional and approved chord progressions and yet—the things he does to those themes! The principal one has no sooner danced forward, bright and daring as a laughing dryad, when his creator takes him in hand and leads him by means of the musicians' mystic keys into every related harmonic realm, ushers him into the minor, pulls him out again, inverts him, upsets him, makes him shout, makes him creep, makes him whisper; dangles him down in the bass, throws him up in the treble, tries him in double-thirds, in octaves, in sixths. The secondary theme, too, receives conspicuous attention, but never for a moment is that first theme allowed to stand still or get away. It almost finds a breathing-spell when the master first turns to the shy little secondary theme—which really has to be coaxed into prominence—but that panting first theme is quickly pounced upon and again propelled forward. Before long the two of them are gamboling up and down the staff—one after the other, and sometimes together—until at the final chord, they are in perfect attune and ready to live happy ever after,

as are *Pamina* and *Tamino* at the end of the opera—when their terrible trials are over.

The "terrible trials" of *Tamino* begin at once as the curtain rises upon a woodland scene. The hero enters breathlessly and unarmed, pursued by a huge serpent; a fire-spitting dragon. The young prince, while hunting in this magic forest, has lost his way, his retinue, and his sword. He is exhausted by his long flight and fright. To an accompaniment of hisses and steam from the serpent—and palpitating music from the orchestra—the hero falls down crying for help. He sings music which tho adhering to the simplest harmonies, could not better express fear were all the mad progressions of Stravinsky and meandering scales of Debussy thrown in. Such is the witchery of Mozart. To achieve an effect for which modern composers require a labyrinth of discords and squirming accidentals, Mozart finds material enough in the orderly paths of harmony laid out by his musical forebears.

Tamino, finally collapsing in a swoon, is rescued by three veiled ladies. These mysterious dames, always dressed in black, have each one a monumental name—but as they always appear together and sing together, we may as well dispose of them always collectively as the Three Ladies. Vamps or vixens would more accurately describe them, but "Ladies" they must be called because they are ladies-in-waiting to the *Queen of the Night* whose somber castle is close by in the magic forest; its grim high walls can be seen by the audience. The *Three Ladies* rescue *Tamino* by the simple process of gracefully flinging their silver javelins at the flame-spitting monster, and thereby killing him. Then they look at *Tamino,* pity him, admire him, decide to apprize the *Queen* of his

advent at her door, quarrel among themselves as to which ones shall go and which one remain with the handsome youth, and finally all go out together.

A meager enough scene in point of action; but don't imagine that because the *Three Ladies* are not the nucleus of the opera and not often on the stage—don't imagine their rôles unimportant. There are no less than fifteen solo parts in this opera, and not one of them has Mozart left unimportant. Tho designated on the program dimly as an *Armed Man* or *A Boy* or a *Genie,* every mother's son and God-given voice among them has music to interpret that is prominent, indispensable and glorious. This very first trio of the dubious ladies is twelve pages long, of attic uprightness—or downrightness—in point of simplicity, yet splendidly varied and aglow with harmonic beauty. Mozart here evens up with Herr Schickaneder—first fling. Mozart longed to write a serious opera; his very soul pined for the heroic. Schickaneder's insistence on a comedy rôle did heavy damage to this dream, but he was too greatly in need of money to oppose the manager who paid promptly. So the light arias were furnished as contracted for; but you may rest assured that Mozart fully intended—and succeeded in—overshadowing them with an abundance of music that was *not* light.

Tamino, left alone, recovers consciousness and is startled at the sight of the dead serpent. He realizes he is saved but knows not who speared the thing, with those three diminutive javelins. He is presently diverted by sounds of an approaching piper. Herr Schickaneder now holds the footlights. He enters as *Papageno,* garbed in a costume distinctly resembling a man tarred and feathered. His appearance is explained in his opening aria;

he is a bird-catcher and dresses to deceive his victims. He would like to catch pretty girls as well, but failing in this——. The words of his aria proceed along the usual lines of comic opera inanities, but not so the music; there is nothing of the commonplace about this. For bubbling, rollicking, refined fun there never was before or since such an outpour of pure music—music undefiled. Here again Mozart overtops his manager, for try as he will to divert the audience by gestures and grimaces, dancing and piping, the hapless Herr Schickaneder never in this world can make his hearers cease to notice the merry tune and tinkle of that music.

But this aria once finished, Mozart, the Immortal, must bow to the laws that be and make way for mediocrity. There is one phase of light opera he can not eliminate. The conductor's baton is laid down while *Tamino* and *Papageno* speak in dialog. The music rests while the manager-actor is given a chance to utter comic lines, to register cowardice upon seeing the serpent, then—on discovering it is dead—to play the braggart and claim that he killed it while *Tamino* was unconscious. It is safe to say there would have been none of this abomination of spoken dialog in the opera were it not for the insistent rôle of *Papageno*. Mozart was thoroughly capable of writing musical recitative that would adequately express any words of worth-while emotion. But *Papageno's* twaddle—about as dramatic as ordinary talk at a breakfast-table—was never meant for music; it was meant for exactly what Schickaneder wrote it for—to give himself abundant chance to play the clown.

We read in E. J. Dent's admirable book on Mozart that "the life he had been leading with Schickaneder now began to tell on his constitution." Mozart's intense loath-

ing of the spoken word in this his magnus opus, may well have accelerated his untimely death. Again quoting from Dent: "He fully recognized that the interruption by spoken dialog of the continuous flow of the musical sound, is almost always disastrous. . . ."

So pity with all your heart the mighty Mozart who, while striving to build an immortal dome, was forced to include in the structure a tawdry side-show stage to allow for some vaudeville chatter. Banjo-twanging during a requiem mass could hardly be more incongruous. And yet so great was Mozart's genius that he conquered *quand même;* a greater example of overcoming I can not for the moment recall.

Hark back with me now to our story—to the hero *Tamino* and that bragging turkey-cock *Papageno.* The veiled *Three Ladies,* making a timely reentrance, chance to overhear the "Birdman's" claim to valor in the matter of vanquishing that serpent with those frail javelins. One of the Ladies promptly clamps a huge padlock on *Papageno's* lips as a punishment for lying, while another one hands *Tamino* a medallion picture of the *Queen's* stolen daughter. This is done that he may become enamored of the hapless maid and proceed at once to steal her back again from the *Queen's* arch-enemy *Sarastro.* The *Queen* herself, on learning of the handsome stranger's presence near her castle, has devised this maneuver and sent the medallion to him. Having imparted to us by prosaic speech thus much of the complex plot, the Ladies again fade from view—and Mozart is again permitted to make music.

With thoughts very probably and humanly in a turmoil of hate at mere sight of the preceding pages of dialog, he forthwith composes a love-song. Good dis-

cipline this might be for any of us. Apparently with Mozart the harder he hates the better he loves. *Tamino's* rhapsody over the picture is a simple-looking song (all of Mozart looks simple), but woe to the unwary singer who approaches Mozart unprepared; the swaying wand of this gentle-seeming magician soon involves you in a maze—trips you up with unexpected intricacies of rhythm. Only a thorough all-round musician may ever venture to play his own accompaniment while singing a Mozart aria, for Mozart never stooped to the street-song device of a tune on top and something below to hold it up.

As for this song of *Tamino's,* tho the audience understand not a word of it, they would know from the music alone that the man is in love. An added acquaintance with the libretto would apprize them that this fire of love suddenly enflamed by one glance at *Pamina's* picture was "destined to endure forever."

Papageno—true to the dictates of Grand Opera—has remained in the background throughout this tenor solo, assiduously pretending not to hear it. At its conclusion he comes forward as do also the *Three Ladies* who, it seems, had not "faded" very far. In plain spoken words they tell *Tamino* of *Pamina's* abduction by an "evil wizard" and they further inform him that the hero who rescues her shall be given her hand in marriage.

Enough said! *Tamino* is for going at once: "I fly to save her—my Life! my Love!"—with which exclamation he most likely would "fly" *con amore*—not necessarily on wings, but into the wings—did he not suddenly hear impressive music. This is promptly explained—very concisely and minutely explained—no loophole is left for the remotest possibility of our misunderstanding the occasioning cause of this music.

"It is the harmony preceding the *Queen!*"

"She is coming!"

"See—here she is!"

"It is she!"

The libretto then says: "Thunder" and: "Enter the *Queen.*"

Surely dialog and directions could not do more; yet in spite of this we find ourselves wholly unprepared for the amazing splendor of the ensuing scene when adequately presented. The stage is darkened, a back-drop slowly parts and we see in a glowing firmament a radiant figure poised in the curve of a silver moon. It is *Astrafiamente,* Queen of Night; a vision of commanding glory, star-decked and crowned, and robed in a cloud of trailing tulle. There is a hush of silence. The spell of the picture enthralls, then slowly by means of stage-mechanism, which works without a hitch at the Metropolitan, the Night Queen floats down and forward—from starry firmament to firma terra.

But wait till you hear her sing! If you had doubts before, you will doubt no longer that for the moment heaven has come to earth—so far as sight and sound are concerned. No second-rate soprano ever attempts the rôle of *Astrafiamente.* Her star-gleaming robe symbolizes her attainments. Only stars of the first magnitude may presume to play the part of this Nocturnal Queen.

Her words are banal as the rest of the libretto—untrue to her character in point of fact, for this aria—music and all—was written before her creator decided to make her a bad, vicious, malign, sorceress! Her malevolence must be harped upon continually or we might easily forget it. She seems to have a normal, motherly hankering

to get back her daughter whom *Sarastro* has stolen; we can't much blame the outwitted *Queen* for being a bit spiteful about it. In her first aria and recitative, this *claire-de-lune* lady is all that a lady should be—and more. She tells how her child was torn from her arms—and her soul since then is wasting with grief. This part of the aria is andante; both music and words are weighted with sorrow. But we must not forget for a moment that Herr Schickaneder wishes us to understand that this heart-wrung mother does not mean it at all. She seeks to recapture *Pamina* for the sole purpose of getting even with old *Sarastro*. Other infatuated youths, like *Tamino*, we presume she has sent on this same errand, and promised the same reward. The latter half of her aria is all "allegro" and dazzling with the promise of *Pamina* as a bride. The mere wizardry of her music is magic enough to inspire great deeds of daring. She flashes upon *Tamino* a shimmering maze of scales, staccatos and high notes. The stage-manager has brought her down from high regions, but the composer certainly carries her up again. High *C* is a mere starting-point—a sort of cradle to rock in. *D*-flat is a look upward; *D*-natural is a bit lofty, and *E*-flat is a good halting-place—a region long sacred to the real aristocrats of sopranodom. It was by the achievement of this pinnacle—full-throated and sustained—that Tetrazzini became famous over night. The next step, *E*-natural, is the rim of the world. Breathe deeply now, and give pause. Comes a leap into space—then behold—High *F!* An altitude this that none but Mozart dared to dream of demanding. But he insisted. His Magic Queen must prove her unearthiness by her singing.

You see, there are several reasons why one does not

often have a chance to hear this opera: *The Queen of Night* is one of them.

After this spell-binding necromancy of high notes, *Astrafiamente* returns to her stars and crescent moon; the drop curtains of the night close together, and *Tamino* and *Papageno* are again alone.

Time for another fun-song the alert Schickaneder decides—tho his prancing *Papageno,* capering about with padlocked lips, can do nothing now but hum. But this he does loudly and thereby participates grotesquely and effectively in a duet with *Tamino.* He bewails his plight and gesticulates frantically, maddened by the futile hum his sealed lips emit. A droll enough situation but only worth while because of the clean, bright, captivating music it has called forth from the hard-driven composer. Tho himself at the portals of death, hounded by debts and countless worries, Mozart still could laugh when required to. For humor in music no composer of light opera can do better than to study with humble reverence the abounding merriment of Mozart.

This humming duet is broken into, or added unto, by the ubiquitous *Three Ladies* who again enter with further instructions from the *Queen.* They pause first to unloose the padlock from *Papageno's* mouth and to turn the duet into a quintette about the awfulness of lying; it becomes quite a preachment not only to *Papageno,* who promises "never again," but to the whole world: "Let all refrain from falsehood."

This moralizing disposed of, one of the ladies presents *Tamino* with a gift from the *Queen* to take upon his journey—*The Magic Flute.* He is told it will protect him and "guide him safe in danger's hour." They all

sing together on this theme and a sequence of flute-tones plays over the orchestra.

That mention of "danger's hour" suddenly decides *Papageno* to say "good evening" and depart. But the ladies inform him firmly that the *Queen* requires him to accompany *Tamino* on his venture to *Sarastro's* castle. Another chance for comic contortions, shivers and terrors, on the part of *Papageno*. But a vivid remembrance of the padlock so easily clapped upon him by these same ladies induces him promptly to obey them. They mollify his terror with a gift of magic bells which like the Magic Flute will exert a charm when played upon.

By way of further cheer the travelers are informed that three "Winged Boys"—mysterious beings—will follow them on their way, to guide and counsel when in trouble. All this is brightly sung above an answering orchestra, and finally the whole group join in the time-honored, regulation Grand-Opera code—singing again and again, through several pages the reiterated words:

"Farewell, till we meet again!"

Since the exit of the *Queen,* Mozart has set to music a constant change of theme and mood and action throughout two and twenty pages—without a moment's pause or any dominating solo. The words are of such varying weight and import, we might think he must needs fall back upon recitative to make them clear. But not so. He finds a new theme and rhythm for every thought as it comes along, and yet the entire swing of those twenty-two pages is well-rounded and complete; just a happy, easy flow of music, ever-changing like a mountain-stream, yet always keeping to its course. Never—never do you find Mozart nodding or running short of melodies, fresh-plucked and dew-sparkling.

The scene now changes to a room in *Sarastro's* Egyptian Temple, where we see how *Pamina* fares in the abode where, according to her mother, "A tyrant force has placed her." In point of fact she dwells in sumptuous halls, and is attended by devoted slaves. She might be perfectly happy were it not that she misses her mother. (She does not know, it seems, that Schickaneder at the last minute decided to change her mother from a doting parent to an evil genius.) *Pamina* needs her mother chiefly to protect her from the persistent attentions of one of the slaves—the leader of the group. He is altogether too devoted; he is a huge black horror to *Pamina*. His name is *Monostatos*. She is fleeing from him as the scene opens, is so terrified that she falls in a swoon. Just then *Papageno* enters.

Heaven and the librettist alone know how he got here, inside the Temple, and separated from *Tamino*. But here he is, wandering like a Cook's tourist through the Egyptian architecture, until suddenly he sees the hapless maid and the black monster. *Papageno* is scared to a shiver at sight of him, while *Monostatos,* equally affrighted, quakes and trembles—almost turns brown—at the vision of this befeathered biped. They both edge away—look back—grunt in terror—think they each have seen the devil—and finally rush off-stage in opposite directions. All of which the music deliciously portrays. And how few the notes, and simple the harmony! Mozart discovered early that in rhythm and in tempo is character's hidden self most revealed.

Papageno, soon conquering his fear, returns just as *Pamina* recovers consciousness. Spoken dialog also returns. (*Papageno* and the spoken word are almost synonymous.) It occurs to him that this may possibly

be the imprisoned daughter of the *Queen of Night.* He compares her features with those of the medallion-picture (which *Tamino,* it seems, has handed over to him—a most unloverlike proceeding). This gives him a chance to be funny over the fact that, tho all else agrees, she has legs and arms while the picture has none. When assured by *Pamina* that she actually is the stolen child of *Astrafiamente, Papageno* proceeds to tell of the infatuated Prince who is seeking to rescue her. *Pamina,* of course, on hearing this is as eager to "fly" as *Tamino* was when first he saw her picture. *Papageno,* too, urges immediate flight. But before they go they pause to sing a duet. Maybe in real life we would not do this, but magic love and magic music might inspire us to anything. There is certainly right here the very magic of music—no one ever denies this. Had Mozart done no other good deed in all his life this one divine duet must have sufficed to passport him into Heaven. It is a eulogy of love; the kind of love that God tells us He *is.* In the heart of Mozart there was something both God-like and child-like, or never could he have given to his devouring enemy—the gibbering, befeathered Schickaneder—a participation in this serene song; clear-shining and beneficent as the morning star. If you never have heard "Dove Prende," hie you at once to the nearest music-store, buy you a record—and then in solitude—on your knees it might well be—listen to this song, which the angels in Heaven, I am sure, never tire of tho all the music of earth since Pan first piped has radioed its way to their ears.

Another change of scene brings us into a sacred grove facing three austere temple-gates. We hear now the voices of the three *Winged Boys,* the genie who serve

as guides to *Tamino,* who, strayed from even the slight comfort of *Papageno,* finds himself alone in this strange dim setting, alone and at a loss what next to do.

The advice *Tamino* hears from the *Winged Boys* is no more definite than that which we all hear in hours of indecision if we listen to the inner voice: "Be stedfast, patient, and discreet." This is the sum of their counsel. If we regard the whole opera in its symbolic sense, the genii plainly betoken Silence, Patience, and Perseverance; the safest guides through life's dim maze for impetuous *Tamino* to follow—he being none other than "Everyman." According to Mozart these mystic voices—Silence, Patience, and Perseverance,—always sing together in gentle accord and create the sweetest harmony.

Again alone, when the *Winged Boys* have left him, *Tamino* tries his best to be "stedfast, patient, and discreet" in his search for *Pamina.* He believes he at last has come to the castle of her abductor, the evil wizard, *Sarastro.* The three gates look ominous, but he ventures to knock at one of them. Instantly a shivering, unseen chorus shouts "Arresta!" "Draw back!" "Everyman" has plainly made a mistake; a situation familiar enough to all of us. Nothing to do now but try another door. *Tamino* does this and again hears the terrifying "Stand-back!" Woe to him or to us if after two failures hope falters. *Tamino* attempts the third door. He does not know—we never know—to what doom or delight the next step may lead. This time the door is opened to *Tamino*—opened by a priestly figure of benign appearance who asks what the stranger seeks in these sacred halls. *Tamino,* rising to the occasion, replies that he is seeking "Honor and Virtue"—he has *Pamina* in mind. With illuminating insight the Priest responds: "How do

you hope to find these while vengeance and murder reign in your heart?"

There is high philosophy here—a touch of Freemasonry perhaps—surely not the pen of Schickaneder.

Tamino protests that his thoughts of vengeance are justly aimed at a tyrant villain. "None such dwell here," the good priest answers. He further tells *Tamino* that the great *Sarastro* is wise and kind; tho he stole *Pamina*, it was not to harm but to help her. *Tamino* doubts and disbelieves. He faces the blank wall we all know—the eternal Why. He cries out in despair: "When—Oh, when, shall I learn the meaning?" To this comes the cryptic reply: "When Heaven shall lead you to Wisdom's band."

The Priest disappears and *Tamino* despairs: "O gloomy night—when wilt thou vanish?"

"Soon! Soon!" cries a hidden voice (the deep-hid hope in "Everyman's" heart). The same concealed voice assures him that *Pamina* is still alive.

All the preceding scene is recitative—terse, vigorous, and expressive—the rhythmic and tonal realm well staked off by sparse but ample chords in the orchestra.

With the rebirth of hope comes a rebirth of music. *Tamino* takes out his flute; he plays and sings—to the angels above and to all creation—hoping, praying, that help will come somehow, somewhere. He has high dreams of possible wonders to be worked by the tones of that magic flute; who knows but that they may topple down old *Sarastro's* entire temple—and release *Pamina* at once! Thus extravagant is hope after a siege of dire despair. Indeed so beautiful is this aria of alternating flute and song it might of itself arouse faith in the Sphinx or a prayer to the Pyramids.

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SEMBRICH AS "PAMINA" IN "THE MAGIC FLUTE"

What actually does happen is far from supernatural; it is prosaic and simple as many a real answer to prayer. *Tamino* hears the familiar sound of *Papageno's* bird-pipe answering his flute. It's not much of a miracle, but it is a bit comforting none the less. On second thought *Tamino* surmises that *Papageno* has already found *Pamina.* Oh joy! He rushes off to meet them—rushes in exactly the wrong direction, as we all do when senseless eagerness prevents us from standing still and waiting.

Tamino has no sooner disappeared in one direction, when *Papageno* and *Pamina* enter from another. They have heard *Tamino* and are joyously following him while fearfully fleeing from *Monostatos.* But *Tamino* is uppermost in their thoughts. "Let us hasten to him," they cry, whereupon they pause to sing about it! And because great Mozart wrote the music, no matter how absurd the action, or—rather—the pause, you say God bless them for it.

Whatever you hear of Mozart, whether aria, duet, terzet, or ensemble, you always feel an impulse to assert that this particular form is after all the one that shows him at his best. In duets he never spurns, as they do to-day, that mellifluous blending of the voices in the simple, primeval harmony of thirds, which is God's first law for duets. After a hearing of this joyful, natural union as achieved in the older compositions, one truly feels like saying: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." In modern opera we call them duos; they have little or no concord or unanimity of phrase—the two voices maintain separate establishments throughout.

While *Papageno* and *Pamina* are still "hastening on" with all their vocal might, *Monostatos* rushes upon them,

grinning vengeance at sight of his "entrapped birds." He calls his slaves to bind them. All would be lost for the fugitives, did not *Papageno*—unexpectedly quick-witted—bethink him of his magic bells. There may be deep symbolism buried here, but in this instance one refuses to delve—one prefers to dance: a tantalizing tingle of rhythm and tune has suddenly bubbled up to the top. *Monostatos* and his slaves soon find themselves helpless; they are irresistibly impelled to hop up and down and sing a jibbering "la—la" in time with the magic bells. Under the spell of that music they might keep it up through the rest of the opera and not even the audience would tire—but an approaching chorus is heard. It is *Sarastro* himself and his pontifical train.

Papageno as usual shudders with fear. How explain to the great Lord of the Temple this abduction of Pamina? "Tell the truth," admonishes Pamina, the ethical teaching imparted her in this home of Wisdom thus showing effect.

Sarastro and his procession impressively enter, to an accompaniment of trumpets and song—all lauding his Wisdom and Beneficence. This is not an expression of mere lip-service and practised obedience. *Sarastro* represents the actual power of high vision and deep kindliness. *Pamina,* knowing his gentle justice, fearlessly kneels before him, confessing herself a culprit in that she has tried to escape, but she tells him, too, of *Monostatos'* vile attentions.

Sarastro's first phrase—solemn, simple, forgiving—would, even without words, convey all the deep import of tenderness, self-mastery and high purpose that Mozart meant to put in them. Mozart loved his *Sarastro* music.

To him *Sarastro* epitomized the real grandeur of the Grand Opera he longed to write.

Sarastro, the all-knowing, understands *Pamina*—her fears and struggles, her longings, the love in her heart for *Tamino* (the dream-prince she awaits as all maidens do) and her desire to escape the walls that enclose her. But Fate is immutable; neither she nor we may overstep the barriers that hedge us in. She must not go; *Sarastro* bids her be "stedfast." The same word this that the *Winged Boys* gave to *Tamino:* a password of inverted meaning—stand firm, as it were, and you will get there.

Pamina, acquiescing—humbly resigned to obedience—suddenly finds to her utter amaze, her dear dreams realized.

Deep symbolism here—high philosophy—the splendid power of resignation. Giving up all hope of love, all further seeking for her Prince—behold he comes! And, bless you, it is *Monostatos,* the hated villain, who brings him to her. Enemies come handy, sometimes! Not that they mean to help us, but all things—even devils, it seems, work together eventually for good. *Monostatos,* fleeing from the scene after his painful experience of compulsory dancing, has run across *Tamino.* He suspects at once that this audacious wanderer in the Temple-grounds is the one to whom *Papageno* and *Pamina* were so vociferously "hastening." So he hurries the culprit to *Sarastro,* expecting high reward for his vigilance. With a crisp new theme, all his own, in the orchestra—chipper, staccato, and insolent—he drags *Tamino* forward.

Then behold what happens! True love—destined love—recognizes its own at once. Regardless of all surroundings, of even the black man's mincing music which still permeates the orchestra, *Tamino* and *Pamina* rush

to each other's arms. They sing right over the incongruous music—right through it; they make love-music out of it. Love, blind and deaf, over-rides all else. The entire assemblage exclaim in astonishment at this scene of rapture enacted before them.

Monostatos, taking possession again of his misused theme in the orchestra, tells *Sarastro* how *Pamina* was preparing to escape with this stranger whom he has luckily captured just in time. *Sarastro* cuts him short. "Seventy strokes on his back." This is the order given, the reward that he gets. It must have gone hard with Schickaneder to allow *Monostatos* this moment of "funny stuff"—this chance to enact the foiled fool.

Sarastro now bids the two strangers be led to the "Temple of Probation," where their love must be tested. Happiness is only for those who have strength to endure unfalteringly through the period of initiation; all of which merely symbols this dim precursor to Heaven—Life.

A veil is thrown over each of the probationers. We all go through life with clouded vision. Thus veiled *Pamina* and *Tamino* find that they no longer see each other, which means, of course, that they fail to understand each other.

The solemn procession, headed by *Sarastro* and *Pamina,* now returns to the Temple, singing vaguely but majestically of Justice and Virtue, of Heaven and Earth. The symbolism here, I imagine, consists in the combination of doggerel words—so entirely earthly—and Mozartian music—so touched with Heaven.

The second act (there are only two) opens in a forest at night. Stringed instruments—sotto voce—accompany the entrance of *Sarastro* and the white-garbed priests.

To our modern eyes the scene might be strongly suggestive of the Ku Klux Klan, did not the music so plainly reveal a spirit of hallowed peace and exalted purpose. A gracious splendor of inspired music weaves its way through simple harmonies, upright and archaic as the trees in God's first temple.

Sarastro's opening aria is a prayer for the young novitiates. Listen well to this aria and chorus—all ye who have ears to hear—and remember that it first resounded in the mind of one who already was facing the final portal of his own initiation. In those sweet encompassing harmonies, in the tender cadence of that undertone reaching down, as is were, to uplift the fallen—listen with all your heart, and you will verily hear therein something of the pity and the tremendous reach—the glory and the wonder—of the love of God.

Mozart fairly wrenched out his heart when composing and then—more than once—saw the throbbing thing tossed about in the dust. Of this particular aria he writes: ". . . Unluckily I was in his box as the second act began—the ceremonial scene. The all-knowing" (meaning his host) "applauded loudly but laughed at everything. At first, I was patient and tried to draw his attention to certain passages, but he insisted on laughing at everything. That was more than I could stand. I called him a 'Papageno' and went out, but I don't believe the ass understood what I meant."

After *Sarastro's* prayer *Tamino* and *Papageno* are led in and solemnly questioned. *Tamino,* knowing well that he can not otherwise attain love (*Pamina*) promises to endure all tests, even at the risk of his life.

Papageno is not so ready with promises, as he seeks neither wisdom nor love. All he wants—so he claims—

is food, drink, and sleep. But he is awakened to higher desires when informed by the priest that there is for him too a destined love—her name being *Papagena.* "What! Pa-pa-pa!" Funny acting again for Herr Schickaneder.

But there is really sweet idealism and fair philosophy in this insistent similarity of name for the preordained mate of the seeker who is willing to achieve self-mastery and high sacrifice. *Papageno,* like *Tamino,* at last promises to obey—to accept even death itself—if need be.

The first command is to speak to no woman—not even to the destined loved one should they meet. This command is emphasized by a brief but impressive duet: "Beware of the viles of women"—a comic-opera sort of title, well adapted to a jingling tune, a knowing nod, and a wink of the eye for emphasis. But not so when Mozart writes the music. This duet is sung by two priests: it is fugue-like and uplifting, with a sweep to its phrases that impressively recall that momentous hour still sounding through the ages when Moses read aloud from tablets of stone five words of similar import.

The assemblage of priests now departs. *Tamino* and *Papageno* are left in darkness. High symbolism again; How often, after our sternest resolves, instead of light only a deeper gloom envelops us. *Papageno* frets and shivers at the darkness. *Tamino,* the high-born, exclaims instead: "Endure it! Suffer, if you must, and believe it the will of Heaven."

At this moment calamity indeed comes to meet them: the *Three Ladies* enter. These come not merely to typify temptation—tho this phase, too, is evident as they soon are pleading for some reply to their words, and *Tamino* must well-nigh choke *Papageno* to keep him from breaking his vow of silence toward women—but they are here

chiefly to emphasize and make prominent the constant terror that "Everyman" in his course through life encounters. This eternal terror is the fear of death. The "Ladies of Darkness" in dulcet harmony diabolically declare that the priests of this temple are unholy sorcerers enmeshing all who follow them—enticing them to horrors that lead to death. One wonders whether they know that in the recent duet of the priests very similar words of warning were used by them about women; death, too, was mentioned as the sure result of their enticements.

By this conflict of warnings Man is depicted as a free agent. The Prince—the one of heroic mold—does not waver in decision; he gives no glance or reply to these gentle-voiced harpies of the night. *Tamino* has a good deal to say, but it is entirely directed to *Papageno,* in a desperate effort to quell his rash impulse to address the *Ladies* and believe all they say. In this quintet of divers intent—the *Ladies* singing to one purpose, the two men opposing even each other—we still find in the harmony of Mozart as in the Justice of God, that all things work together for good. Altho confusion occurs on the stage—confusion, dissension, and fear—the all-enfolding master-music forever evolves into harmony. The pulse-beat changes, but no discord protrudes—and as for creation—there is no end to its vast variety! There is vigor, there are big uprising crescendos, but when turmoil threatens the clear-voiced peal of trombone, flute or cornet comes breaking through like far-flung sunbeams, or the gleaming trumpet-call of angels.

Another change of scene; another moon-lit garden. *Pamina* is again immured in the spacious enclosure of *Sarastro's* sacred groves and Temple. She is discovered gracefully sleeping upon a bank of flowers. This heroine

certainly does need a mother—any sort of a mother would tell her that a moon-lit garden is no place for a young girl to sleep.

Monostatos soon appears, enamored as ever and quite recovered from his recent punishment of "seventy stripes."

This scene, to us so glaringly symbolical of Virtue, all white—and Sin, all black—was really not so intended, being written instead in a jocular vein on a par with the *Papageno* interludes. To the Viennese—and in fact to all Europe—an Ethiopean suggests Ethiopia, nothing more; his dark skin is wholly geographical. It is looked upon as something exotic, tropical and indeed picturesque. So there was nothing repellent to Mozart's audience in the buffoon aria *Monostatos* now sings—to the moon and to all creation—about his longing for a wife. But never mind the words. Mozart has given him a rollicking song, a capering two-step that must have made old Schickaneder wince, whenever he, standing dumb in the wings, was forced to listen to it.

He doubtless heard both it and the ensuing applause very plainly, but *Pamina,* close by on her bank of flowers, sleeps peacefully through it all. His song ended *Monostatos,* still sounding her praises in vaudevillian soliloquy, steps over to her side. Even this does not wake her. It takes thunder to do that—and a mild earthquake—and the voice of *Astrafiamente* crying out in true tragedian awfulness: "Avaunt! thou villain!" One libretto has it: "Stand back!" and another, "Stop there!"—but they all agree in the wording of the stage directions—no shadow of doubt about them: "It thunders" and "The Queen rises from beneath the earth." This upheaval occurs

close to *Pamina's* flower-bank—and probably disturbs it a little—anyway, she awakes at last.

Monostatos, on seeing the dazzling *Night-Queen,* runs to cover but stays near enough to hear all the talk that ensues between mother and daughter. The *Queen,* we soon learn, has not appeared at this timely moment merely to rescue her child; she has chosen this opportunity, it seems, for the purpose of making *Pamina* so grateful and convinced of her mother's goodness that she will be ready to obey her every command.

Pamina has a strong sense of duty, but one of life's hardest lessons to learn is the fact that each soul must discover for itself where duty lies. *Pamina* wishes to obey her mother, but what is she to do when the *Queen* hands her a dagger and bids her kill *Sarastro?* Some trumped-up reason is given the girl: *Sarastro,* so the *Queen* says, has not only stolen *Pamina,* and now separated her from *Tamino,* but he also long ago stole from *Pamina's* father the mighty "Symbol of Wisdom—the golden Shield of the Sun"—whatever that is. Maybe the Masons know. But it is evidently too occult for elucidation, either verbal or musical; Mozart leaves it in the air—where the Sun belongs—and spoken dialog now gives way to music that makes no mention of mystic Shield. The *Queen* sings of Hate—of throbbing, "roaring," unquenchable hate, not only for *Sarastro,* but for *Pamina,* too, if she fails to kill him. "Be thou then accursed forever!" The blazing *Astrafiamente* fairly startles the stars with her hate; she quakes and shakes and staccatos with hate. It is all in the minor key, but fast and furious, with sizzling accents leaping forth sharp and snapping as crackling flames.

When Mozart turns to the minor it is always note-

worthy. His music is by nature so bright-tinted and joyous that the dark-hued scales, with him, invariably depict dire deeds or fathomless despair. But ever and always for every deed—be it devilish or divine—he clings to harmonies that are simple, sure, and unmistakable. The modern composer would whip up in the orchestra a swirl of discords—snarling ninths, unaffiliated scales and fighting sequences—to convey the idea of this Night Queen's fusillade of fury; her part in the portrayal would probably be a series of Valküre shrieks. All this might be truly artistic, impressive, and a-thrill with the needed sense of the marvelous. But there is also a potent, incisive power in simplicity. Clear and clean as the dawn of day are the harmonies and themes of Mozart. But trust him unerringly to know the heart-beat, the rhythm, of every emotion. With reiterated notes, swift and determined as a clenched fist, he hammers into your consciousness the hellish fury of *Astrafiamente's* rage.

But tho the words and music of this aria are a very hornet's nest of hate, there must be nothing "hellish" about the voice of the prima donna who sings it. A demon all divine about describes the effect her tones must achieve! Only a voice purified by the fire of torturing years of practise, or one plucked straight from the singing choirs of Heaven—only such are fitted to clarion forth the concentrated *diablerie* of this Mozartian mad-song. The singer must batter and buffet every note on the staff and above it. And right here let me pause to say—there is no such thing as reshaping Mozart—eliminating or adding unto his tonal creations to suit voice or fancy of the singer. His high notes are not decorations—mere appended ornaments, as they often are with Meyerbeer or Rossini; they are fixed stars in

the scheme of his universe. When *Astrafiamente* is sent soaring to the zenith—to the ultimate peril—the altitudinous glory of high *F,* and is required to rap sharply at this gleaming gate to the Beyond—she must obey or the whole firmament of Mozart's dream falls down.

So when you meet a prima donna who has sung the rôle of the *Queen of Night* in "The Magic Flute"—sung it more than once—doff your hat if you are of this hemisphere, or your shoes if you are an oriental; you are in the presence of a Diva worthy of the name. Frieda Hempel has sung this rôle, so too has Marcella Sembrich.

Pamina, mute and amazed, looks at the dagger—then at her mother—and hears with freezing horror the command, and the impending curse if she disobeys. All the stars from on high seem falling upon her as the tornado of tones is flung from her mother's lips.

The *Queen* disappears as she came—descends into the earth—in a cloud of black tulle and a trap-door. *Pamina* is left still gazing at the dagger, wondering helplessly what next to do—and knowing well that she can never think of attempting to kill *Sarastro,* even tho he were all-evil as her mother would have her believe. Poor *Pamina,* again alone, is again accosted by *Monostatos.* He has heard all, and offers to help her. She shrinks from his mere approach, but still more is she terrified at thought of her mother's anger. How live at all under that awful curse from the one she has always loved and yearned for. But to obey the command—to use that dagger as directed—impossible! One wonders that, just by way of practise, she does not start to using it on *Monostatos.* He offers again to help her obey the *Night-Queen's* command; presumably he means to do the daggering himself. *Sarastro* will then be eliminated and she will still have

her mother's love—all this if only she will cease to spurn him. *Pamina* promptly answers "No." By this we see that self-determination is beginning to sprout forth in her heretofore fallow complex.

This whole interview is in dialog; daggers, black men, and development of character, all at once, are too ponderous a combination to convey clearly in music. Don't blame Mozart; he didn't make the libretto! But Schickaneder did—or claimed he did—and he died insane—an established fact, this, which no one wonders at.

To return to *Pamina*: The Black-a-moor is so incensed at her reply that he threatens to kill her. *Pamina* is on her knees pleading for her life when suddenly *Sarastro* enters. He, like the *Queen,* says "Stop there!" *Monostatos* whines excuses, and claims that the girl and her mother were plotting to kill the High Priest. *Sarastro* bids him go at once, and never show himself on these grounds again. *Monostatos* slinks away muttering vengeance and determined now to join with the *Queen.*

Since *Sarastro* has been told of her mother's scheming, *Pamina* expects him to tear the air with words of revenge in accents similar to those she has lately been hearing, especially when *Sarastro* assures her that it was not his will, but Heaven's high behest, that took her from her mother. He sees the dagger still unsheathed and knows that *Astrafiamente* even now is marshaling her forces for war against him. But does he sing of revenge and hate? Not he. Within this sacred realm—so goes his song—"no thought of blighting vengeance lowers. Soft pity heals each woe."

The lesson of forgiveness is taught *Pamina* by words and music that are soothing, sweet and holy. *Sarastro* speaks of *Tamino* and hopes that he will come, tri-

umphant, through the trials he must endure. When *Pamina* then is married to her Prince and happy, he—*Sarastro*—will be "avenged enough."

"In other's joy we here find peace." Great is the lesson *Pamina* thus learns. It matters not whether she grasps the meaning of the words, for *Sarastro's* music—the harmony of it—enwraps the soul with a sense of love and peace so sure and enduring that one feels upheld, uplifted and lulled to rest in the safe enfoldment of the Everlasting Arms.

Another change of scene. In the modern productions of the opera these numerous stage transformations are not always adhered to. Schickaneder was relying upon his scenic effects and his own comedy for the financial success of the work; we now know that Mozart's music, ably interpreted, will insure success sans scenery and *in spite of* comic caperings that suggest a circus tent.

According to the original plan we now behold a hall in the Temple where we follow the hero and the fool *Papageno* in their encounter with life's lessons and temptations. Their guardian angels—the Three Genii, the "Winged Boys," the disguised sopranos—or whatever you choose to call them, are always nearby with counsel and help; a big esoteric idea, this, but baldly presented by all concerned, save Mozart. Their garb and wings and words all border on the ridiculous. But never mind: the music, the interweaving of these three clear voices in limpid harmony, supported by flute and strings, is aerial and fanciful as gossamer. The flute flits about with fragmentary trills—a will-o'-the-wisp effect that adds sparkle to the ethereal delicacy of this precious puff-ball of a trio flung heavenward—and kept there.

As for the words, they are about as poetic as stove-lids

and stone. "We return the flute we took from you"—this to *Tamino* (our first intimation that the magic gift was ever taken away). And to *Papageno*: "Here again are your bells." (Also news to us.) "Behold a table spread." (Table, well-equipped with food suddenly appears.) "Eat you—and drink!"

Even Mozart must have fallen down under this deadly dump of commonplace words were there not here inserted a wee touch of beneficent uplift.

"Food and drink give power to achieve. Have faith, Tamino, thy goal is near—and you, Papageno, forget not silence."

The *Genii* disappear and, *Papageno* being present, there follows the inevitable interlude of by-play and spoken word. *Tamino* plays on his recovered flute, but *Papageno,* preferring to "play on his teeth," sits down at the table exulting volubly over the fine food. In the meantime *Tamino's* casual flute-tones (casual to him but in point of fact all written down in the book of Fate, as our most trivial acts often prove to be)—these straying tones reach the ear of *Pamina,* who presently rushes onto the scene overjoyed at finding her Prince, her destined love—her "heart's adored."

And now things happen: a situation old as Orpheus, eternal as love—misunderstanding, silence unexplained, pleading unheeded. *Tamino,* mindful of his vow, speaks no word to *Pamina* in spite of her entreaties—her despair at his coldness. With feminine logic, based solely on the nimble knack of jumping to conclusions—any sort of a conclusion—she decides that he does not love her. *Tamino* with the usual masculine density in such matters—his mind wholly absorbed in the fact or duty he is confronting, and therefore incapable of realizing the

depths of her suffering—does nothing to mitigate it. The merest sign, or hand-clasp, or assuring glance of his eye, would have satisfied her longing. But no—he makes no response. This, too, like his random flute-tune, is all written down in the Book. Fate stings all lovers with this whip-lash of misunderstanding.

This is the test that comes heaviest on *Pamina;* it is even harder to bear than the first one, which shattered her preconceived sense of duty to her mother. *Tamino,* on the other hand, is not nearly so distressed; he is sustained by the comforting knowledge that in due time, when the ban is lifted, he will return to *Pamina* and explain his silence. His first test—the ignoring of the *Veiled Ladies*—was the really severe test for him!

It seems a pity that *Pamina* must suffer so deeply, but art is art; the broken heart and crushed flower are the very bulwark and battlements of poetry and music. Right now *Pamina* sings her sweetest song—her only solo. But there is in it no mounting climax of high notes; it is the music of tears, of bated breath and broken phrases, of sudden outbursts that quickly droop. Its closing cadence circles slowly downward like a wounded bird. The spirit of song flies low when love has left. *Pamina,* seeing naught before her but "eternal gloom and the gaping tomb," goes out alone as her song dies down.

Now attention please to *Papageno,* who all this time has been nobly self-effacing; has remained unheard tho not unseen. He is still eating at the table. Without that table he must needs have been off-stage during the preceding scene—hence the table. It also enables him to make merry with his mouth full, and to play the gourmand—loth to leave—when *Tamino,* hearing the trumpets of the temple calling, hurries off and bids *Papageno*

come along. But he just can not do it; he runs back for another drink and finally declares that even tho *Sarastro* send lions to devour him, he will not leave that table. Whereupon a lion does appear, and other beasts, too. Schickaneder hereby has a chance to play the coward to his heart's content—until *Tamino,* hearing his cries, returns and by a few notes from his magic flute causes the papier-maché menagerie to retreat.

The scene-shifters now again make busy, and disclose a subterranean region, where the priests again assemble bearing on their shoulders an illuminated Pyramid; this mystic paraphernalia being of no importance whatever unless it be to typify the character of the song they sing. It is an ode to Osiris, with harmonies monumental in simplicity; their rigidity of line and directness of purpose clean-cut as an Egyptian carving.

Tamino is brought forward, veiled and unseeing. *Sarastro* assures him that the goal is near altho two more trials await him. *Pamina,* also veiled, now enters slowly, still despairing. One moment of grace is allowed her. The veils are removed and the lovers are allowed to address each other—but only to say good-by. *Tamino* man-like, maintains an iron fortitude in the face of emotion; he holds his thought steadily to the trial ahead. To *Pamina* the present moment is the ultimate trial, for she thinks if his love were as hers he surely would be less stoical at this terrible parting. Thus Fate decrees that "Everyman" and "Everywoman" must, throughout life's course—the great Initiation—misunderstand each other.

In Masonry the initiation ceremony symbolizes the overcoming of the fear of death; hence the symbolism of this opera. *Tamino* must endure the test—face death itself, unshrinkingly—ere peace and love are his. By

the aid of fortitude he succeeds—but *Pamina* needs no other aid than love; with love assured she knows and sees nothing else—not even death itself. He learns this later—this working force in a woman's heart.

The trio now sung, bespeaking the variant emotions of the lovers, and the sustaining counsel of *Sarastro,* is the most human music in the opera. There is nothing supernatural, grotesque, symbolical or solemn about it. It is just straight, lovely, pure, heart-moving music. Even when the old time-worn Italian opera device of ridiculous reiteration hisses at us in the words "Haste, haste, we must away—let us not delay!"—even this thrown at us exactly fourteen times does not divert from the ingratiating charm of Mozart.

By way of information it may be mentioned that this trio is, according to technical phraseology, in the rondo form, and a rondo, according to *un*technical phraseology, is—by way of bald example—best known and best shown in that admirable nursery ditty—"Three Blind Mice."

Papageno has been off-stage for some moments; we last saw him fleeing from the lions and hastening after *Tamino.* He has remained out of sight throughout one chorus, one dialog, and a trio. This is the utmost one could ask or hope for from an acting-manager who is also owner of the theater, producer and librettist. He now rushes in, panting and pretending, with the best of his art, that he still is following *Tamino*—has had a terrible time keeping up with him. He now finds the stage empty, for *Tamino* and *Pamina* have just been led away by the Priests with *Sarastro* at their head—(also the pyramid and torches).

One of the priests, designated as the Orator, returns,

having heard *Papageno's* fool chatter about seeking *Tamino.*

"Why did you leave him?" the priest asks, and he soon announces that *Papageno* is beyond hope and can never attain to celestial bliss; a wise decree, as we plainly see that *Papageno* has no yearning at all for celestial bliss. All he asks for is wine. "Have you no higher wish?" "None at present," he replies. The Orator summons with his wand a brimming wine-glass, determined apparently to fill the fool according to his folly. *Papageno* is left alone to tipple as he will. He drinks from the non-emptying cup noisily, joyously, lengthily and verbosely. The wine touches his heart; he soon finds himself longing for love—a companion through life. He weeps at the thought of his loneliness; will no one take pity upon him?

Mozart takes pity to the extent of giving him a good-sized aria for the expression of these longings—an aria with the magic bells for accompaniment and the tune and rhythm so uninvolved, so clearly pronounced they would rivet the attention of a pouting baby.

Even fools, it seems, if they sing when in sorrow, mingle harmony with their troubles—even fools may move the all-seeing Fates to give them another chance—another test of character.

An old hag suddenly rises before *Papageno.* She says she has come in answer to his prayers; she will be his loved one. She bids him take her hand. *Papageno* is too astonished and frightened to disobey. At once she is transformed into a comely girl—his destined bride—*Papagena.* He is now too astonished and delighted to remember to obey the earlier command to speak to no woman! He calls out her name and rushes to her—

whereupon she sinks out of sight. *Papageno* thus again left alone is amazed into silence—almost awakened to thoughtfulness.

Comes another change of scene; another spot in the garden.

We see again the three Genii.

The three boy-voices or sopranos sing soft-winged music whose rhythmic form is clear, correct, austere, yet somehow elusive in spite of its simplicity. They sing of the coming dawn. It is a hymn to the God of Day, a gentle pæan of joy because *Tamino* soon will emerge from the darkness of his trials. The harmony of this music is direct and clear as radiating sunbeams, yet something about those firm-set, untroubled triads maintaining their accurate way, in union with—yet wholly apart from—the orchestra, something aloof about them suggests incalculable depths and heights of meaning; you find yourself dimly dreaming of the fourth dimension and the farthest star.

But presently a change comes over the strange placidity of their song, a flutter of agitation—very faint—and a sequence of broken phrases. These herald the approach of *Pamina,* for the Genii know she is bowed in grief—that her reason totters. She enters, a distraught Ophelia, her mother's dagger in her hand. She apostrophizes the weapon as her only friend, since mother and lover both have failed her.

She does not see the guardian Genii—but she hears them as we, too, hear the inner voice when it strives to caution us. Let us not forget that Silence, Patience, Perseverance, are the symbolic names of these three Genii. They speak to *Pamina* now as she raises the dagger to her own breast. Such a crime, they warn her,

is abhorred of Heaven. But she believes her mother's curse rests upon her—what has she to hope from Heaven? Again she lifts the dagger. This time they restrain her by the thought that perhaps after all *Tamino* loves her. But why was he so coldly silent, why did he turn his face away? This they can not answer; she must learn for herself the ways of love. But they can lead her to him, so she decides to follow these three safe guides.

The action of this scene allows for big music—the riven heart at the point of despair is Grand Opera indeed; here the composer has what he longed for. There is real drama in the music now—the very breath of tragedy—but it is all too brief.

Herr Schickaneder-*Papageno* is off-stage for sometime in this portion of the second act, and the reason is clear; he is very, very busy fixing the scenery. No ordinary stage-hands, however numerous, could be relied upon for the next setting; only one strongly driven by financial interest would give to it the needed care, and make sure that every detail was in working order. A truly mountainous task is the achievement of this next stage-picture. The directions unequivocally demand, not merely a mountain, but a "tremendous mountain." And this tremendous structure of paper and paint must have at its base a huge cavern with a "grilled" iron gate that the audience can see through; this point is very important, because what we see through the "grilled" gate is a "sea of leaping flames!" Old Papa *Papageno,* busy fathering this opera, certainly had no time to be in front while this setting was being set. It all has to be done while *Pamina* and the *Boys* are singing, for there are only two acts in the whole opera, and most of the different scenes are adjusted back of a brief drop-curtain.

Let us assume that all is done well and that we do actually behold an impressive mountain with a sea of fire at its base behind a hot, grilled gate. I forgot to mention that this setting also includes a Pyramid bearing some profound inscription. Two mysterious armed men stand as guards at the gate.

Tamino enters and at the same time, it is not amiss to mention, Mozart enters. With the sound of his music, especially at this moment of the opera, all incongruities vanish; the hidden purpose and meaning grow clear. Words may confuse, but music illumines. In a rigid unison of tenor and bass, with the simple solemnity of a Gregorian chant, the *Armed Men* interpret *Tamino* the mystic words above the gate: words to the effect that whoever passes through that flame-illumined gate, to be purified by fire and water (there is a water-fall shown later on)—whoever thus dares, will eventully emerge triumphant, initiated to all mysteries, and destined to all bliss. The tones of these *Armed Men* are telling and sure as gold arrows shot from a bow. But you will not give much heed to them; it is the ensemble, the impressive combine of orchestra and voice that here holds you spellbound. The director's baton becomes the wand of a necromancer, invoking a fugue that is far more "tremendous" and inspiring than the massive mountain built up on the stage. A fugue ever and always conveys the thought of life and its multiple intricacies, how the simplest theme—the most trifling word or act—may lead to incalculable consequences. A harmless little sequence of soft staccato notes starts the turmoil in this fugue; a fragment of youth, it seems, sent forth to dare the dragon's teeth of life. It is tossed about, bitten into, snarled at, flung high and flung low, overcome by flames

of passion, uplifted again, then again hit hard by the immutable laws of Fate—or of harmony. A seething furnace of fire is that fugue in the orchestra, while the firm choral chant above it typifies well the peace of a towering mountain whose white-crowned peak eternally touches Heaven.

Tamino, on hearing the words of the dire inscription, answers firmly:

"I shrink from naught; throw wide the gate of Terror!"

At this moment *Pamina's* voice is heard approaching. Her three guides—Silence, Patience and Perseverance—are leading her to her heart's desire. *Tamino* cries out enraptured as she enters, and he asks the *Armed Men* whether the ban is lifted and he may speak to her at last. They give assent, and the lovers embrace—exulting and exalted in the face of death.

Tamino shows to *Pamina* the fiery test ahead of him, the "appalling paths of danger." To this she answers in tones unfaltering, "I'll tread them at your side." No purgatorial flames alarm her after the torment of his silence. Nay, more; so fearless is she, with love at rest in her heart, that she takes the lead—"as tho the road 'mid roses lay." And with that ancient wisdom—that quick insight the woman who loves is endowed with—*Pamina* bids him play on his Magic Flute; "it will quell the spell of our terror." The Magic Flute, of course, means Love.

A super-woman, love has made of *Pamina.* In the closing quartet of this scene her voice rings out over all. The *Armed Men* join with the lovers in a fugue-finale, an apostrophe to the trial ahead of them. It is as rouzing, climactic, and terrifying as music and words

can make it. Then sudden silence! The huge gates are opened; *Tamino* and *Pamina* enter; the gates close behind them. The *Armed Men* disappear, and we watch the lovers through the gates. Still the silence! Then softly a flute-tone, a melody—hesitating, fragile—floating through the air with a faint support of whispering trombone and a tremulous touch of a distant drum. Very adagio, very pianissimo, is this vague mystical interlude interpreting in tones the fantastic idea of a march through the elements.

We see beyond the gates the determined love-guided pair "passing through the fire"—a piece of stage-direction that would read, and seem, and be ridiculous were it not for the miracle of the music, a miracle that in this instance largely consists in the power of contrast—of rhythmic pauses, and subtle tone-quality. The preceding avalanch of fugue has exposed this sublimate of music into a rarified atmosphere—a startling prominence. The effect is indescribable—breath-catching. It stabs—it hurts. One senses a beauty that blinds—a tenderness that stings—a purified peace too great to endure. There are just fourteen measures of this flute-music—measures that are magic indeed.

As it ends we hear the lovers singing softly in the primeval harmony of sixths and thirds—singing of their wondering joy that the flames are conquered, and of their determined courage to face the final test of the "all-engulfing waves."

While they sing thus to the extent of seven adagio measures consuming about three minutes of time, Herr Schickaneder is again busy back-stage—very, very busy. The libretto informs us that "the mountain changes into another." This one presumably is also "tremendous."

But the resemblance here ceases. The first mountain had flames underneath it—this one has a "torrent that precipitates itself from the summit." I have an idea that this scene of the opera was not only in the back of Schickaneder's brain, but that the machinery for it was in the back of the theater, before Mozart was even approached for the music. However it was done we are given to understand that somehow the fiery mountain is changed into a watery one. A momentary dark stage is the modern method of achieving this transformation. With the dawn of the torrential peak, the music again lifts to that rarefied atmosphere of the flute-melody—and we see *Tamino* and *Pamina* traverse the waters. As before, those tender, distant, but penetrating flute-tones impart an unearthly stillness to the scene, in spite of the slight supporting throb of muted drum and trombone. Higher and higher rise the waters (so the directions read) while the lovers press on, *Tamino* still playing his flute, still clinging to love. At last the torrent submerges them. (I am quoting the libretto.) They have learned to meet death without fear: the great Initiation is over.

At once that amazing mountain divides; in its center is a temple. *Tamino* and *Pamina* are seen kneeling before it, giving thanks. Then many voices—unseen voices—sing in loud allegro—"Hail! All Hail! The crown of life awaits you!" It is a throbbing, shouting forecast of the Handel "Hallelujah." We may be sure that this and the preceding fantastic but solemn scenes were to Mozart the heart and soul of the opera. He was singing his own creed in this opera and in a sense, too, his swan-song. In a letter to his father at this time he writes: "I have come to regard death as the key that

unlocks our happiness. I never lie down in bed without considering that perhaps—young as I am—I may the next day be no more."

So this flute-music—set as it is immediately after the fugal frenzy which so readily suggests life—is in reality Mozart's message of peace in death, be the torments what they may.

After these seventy pages of self-expression, this unfettered flight to the empyrean, Mozart, like other mortals, is called upon to do penance. *Papageno* who off-stage has very literally moved mountains, now claims a reward from his Maker: a solo-scene all his own; he, too, yearns for self-expression. There really is a bit of soul-soaring here on the part of Herr Director Schickaneder. He consents to eliminate the spoken word, does all his funny work from now on strictly in time and in tune with music. This is a big concession, almost sacrificial, whereby he shares his applause with the composer—by such acts the soul grows.

We see *Papageno* still alone and disconsolate after the suddenly discovered *Papagena* has with equal suddenness disappeared when he forgot his vow and spoke to her. In desperation he still calls to her, cries her name again and again—plays on his pipe, calls her "wife," "sweetheart," and "darling." But no answer comes to him. So despairing is he at thought of his lost love that he finally takes a rope and makes ready to end all by hanging himself on "yon bough." He goes about it very slowly, pauses again and again to give Fate a chance to intervene. With the rope on the branch and his head in the loop, he still postpones the final yank, the impossible jerk which he pretends to believe will suspend him. Throughout this buffoon despair the orchestra is all

allegro, buzzing with the airiest, merriest, sort of "one, two, three" music. Mozart never misunderstands his cue; when the action calls for comedy, he does his part every time. He makes merry among the instruments, plays the part of Puck, dispenses prank-like tunes while all the time a quest for the Lost Chord—that ultimate Harmony that sounds the soul's awakening—is what his Muse would prefer.

Maybe *Papageno* really thinks he is in earnest. Once again he cries to the world, "Good-by!"—and he actually does take hold of the dangling rope. At this point the three guardian Genii appear. The music remains allegro but its rhythm changes to the good old common time. That firm four-beat, after the tripping three, sounds so business-like and practical, one unconsciously sits upright and square-shouldered. Those mellow boy-voices in their usual sweet accord of thirds and sixths can not express even disapproval harshly; but they stay his act—bid him desist, then in quiet tones that somehow express the endless patience of the "still small voice," they suggest that he ring his peal of bells. The poor fool had entirely forgotten these. He picks them up at once, and so does the music.

Bell-music in Grand Opera is always effective. Composers never fail, when occasion offers, to ring in gladsome changes on this theme. The "Bells of Corneville" sound a peal that, once heard, never leaves one. The Bell-song in "Lakmé" has made that opera immortal. These instances are more prominent in their respective operas than the brief phrases we have here, but brighter effects of the Campanile can nowhere be found than in this "Magic" opera of Mozart's. The rhythm is buoyant as a bubble—a flash and a leap of gambolling sunbeams.

With a parting admonishment to the bell-player to "turn now and look"—the *Genii* disappear. *Papageno* turns and sees—*Papagena.* There follows the inevitable droll duet, and we now learn the reason (Schickaneder probably thought it an inspiration) for those closely identical names; they were devised for the purpose of achieving a pun. Tip-toeing in mazed astonishment toward each other—in unison with a touch of pussy-footing music in the orchestra—the two clown-characters exclaim, "Is it you—Pa-pa-pa-pa-geno!" Then they further sing jocosely of their immediate wedding and the future blessing of little boys and girls who, too, will say—"Pa-pa-pa-pa-geno!" This play of words hardly levels up to the joyous jugglery of Gilbert, but Sullivan is here given more than a working model in the way of a patter-duet. Mozart never wavers, and never imitates even himself. Deadly tired he must have grown of devising melodies for this comedy-pair; characters wholly extraneous to the real purpose of the opera—the huge riddle of life, the dark wanderings of "Everyman" and "Everywoman"—their perpetual encounter with soul-testing terror. The opera could well be given sans *Papageno* and his mate; there would be no noticeable gaps. But Mozart lived up to his contract—furnished all the music required—tho some of it, we imagine, was penned with set teeth!

But the dancing dolls are done with at last. You may be sure, however, that with the final exit of Herr *Papageno,* the rest of the libretto is made brief as possible. The *Queen* and *Monostatos* are now in league to destroy *Sarastro.* The *Three Ladies* are also in the plot. They all enter stealthily and sing "softly, softly, softly!"—in true Grand-Opera fashion. The libretto leaves us

vague as to their plan, but they tell us—while still singing softly—"the temple we undermine"—so we infer some use of dynamite.

Astrafiamente has no staccato now nor high notes—she is shorn of all vocal filigree. Revenge is plain and unbeautiful and, musically speaking, must be maintained, in the minor.

Distant thunder is heard or, it may be, the rumble of an explosion. The conspirators are terribly frightened tho, of course, they keep right on singing. They are still more frightened when they suddenly perceive that their deep-laid plan has achieved nothing more than the demolishment of one intervening wall. Its fall destroys, not *Sarastro,* but *Astrafiamente* herself—"Queen of Night"—for it now lets shine full upon her the rays of the Sun—just rising.

Beyond the tumbled *Masonry*—(note the symbolism here) we see the interior of the temple still secure with *Sarastro* on his throne while *Tamino* and *Pamina* stand before the altar united at last—triumphant Initiates to the great mysteries.

At sight of the Sun the *Queen* and her followers "sink down to unending gloom." There is more than a hint that *Astrafiamente* was intended to portray Queen Maria Theresa as the Masons viewed her.

With this débâcle of dark autocracy there is tragedy in the music; an effect sharp and poignant—a page of real music-drama. Wagner foretold, but devoid of discord, for cacophony has no place in Mozart's realm; that night-bird soaring high in modern music slinks to cover, dwindles to naught, before the radiant sun-shield of Mozart's beaming harmonies.

A finale jubilant chorus of Priests and novitiates

sounds from the temple. "Wisdom and truth win eternity's crown; virtue prevaileth forever." Emblem of Masonry these words may be, or of Christ—or of Buddha. All creeds find accord in the divine harmony of music.

With pontifical trumpets by way of introduction and the solemnity of firm orchestral chords, the chorus closes with an allegro, the soprano mounting high, the violins following, the cellos close after—all tossing to each other bright fragments of melody; a seraphic gambol in the Elysian fields.

When the curtain falls, we have a lingering memory of a beautiful message—the beatitude of death well won, and the Dawn of Joy thereafter!

CHAPTER IX

THE GENIUS OF GERALDINE FARRAR

ABOUT twenty years ago rumors, vague as perfume from an unfolding flower, began to reach America about a new prima donna; a Boston girl, very young and very beautiful; singing at the Berlin Royal Opera House. No American had ever held such a position before—life-member of the opera company which Kaiser Wilhelm supervised, and the Great Frederick founded.

Years went by and still the name of Geraldine Farrar was wafted across the waters—and still she was spoken of as "very young."

American critics grew somewhat incredulous; Germany, of course, is musical and deep-rooted in the science of the art, but New York holds a record of her own in matters operatic, and is not disposed to accept unchallenged a verdict from the land of beer and thorough-bass.

At last the hour came when Geraldine Farrar appeared as a star in her native land. It was a momentous occasion—the opening of the season; a brilliant audience, diamond-glinting and décolleté; an audience familiar with the value of Tiffany tiaras, but inclined to be dubious about Berlin laurels.

The curtain rose upon the first act of "Romeo and Juliet"; a blaze of color and a whirl of gay music. Soon the dancers dispersed, and a slender figure in sapphire satin sauntered down the Capulet stairs, came forward with quiet confidence, and commenced the famous Waltz Song—slowly—dreamily.

With these very first notes Geraldine Farrar revealed originality; she sang them as tho thinking aloud; the words fell from her lips like a tender caress—

"I would linger in this dream that enthralls me."

She closed the aria with brilliant tones, a high note—and a smile. Geraldine Farrar's smile is something to drive a poet to sonnets—and a prince to sighs!

One paper the next morning declared: "From that moment she could have wrapped the whole audience around her little finger."

There followed a "Farrar furor," tho cautious critics were careful to point out that her performance as yet evinced nothing more than "a lovely voice, a peculiarly gifted dramatic temperament, youth, beauty, and considerable experience!" That's all!

"She is not yet a finished artist," these critics said, but at four-and-twenty what would you? Her voice was "golden," and no one denied that her histrionic gifts were phenomenal.

It is strange—this quality of native *greatness*. In the case of these famous singers, one almost feels that the *greatness* makes the voice. The *mind* is what counts, after all. Geraldine Farrar impresses one forcibly with this fact. Her mind is alert, keen, observant, thoughtful, quick at reaching conclusions, widely interested, eager to learn, but at the same time self-contained and firmly poised.

When talking about music her face lights up. She has much to say; she has thought and studied deeply; she is intense, enthusiastic, full of her subject, aglow with earnestness and vitality.

From early childhood she was always singing, always acting, and always *intending to be a prima donna*.

"I began voice-study when I was twelve," she said, "but before that had sung all of 'Faust' in Italian, and acted it according to my own imagination."

When asked if she had not run some risk of harming the vocal cords by beginning so young, she explained that her voice at this age was remarkably mature and full. She was possessed, besides, with an irresistible desire to sing, so it seemed both prudent and wise to commence serious study thus early.

"A born singer is *instinctive,* and selects, almost instinctively, her individual means of expression, avoiding, in the main, what is distinctly harmful. But practise and study are continuously and always necessary. I work faithfully every day with scales and trills and intervals. Before a performance I go over my part, mentally, from beginning to end."

In reply to a question about her ambition, she answered promptly and impressively:

"Yes, I have one very decided ambition: I wish to develop my powers to the fullest extent and most complete beauty, and then—I wish to have the *courage,* when physical strength no longer responds to the creative demands, to *abdicate in favor of Youth!* Youth must be recognized, enjoyed, encouraged! We should have more of this God-given fragrance in our mimic world, and less of hard-earned, middle-aged experience.

"I intend to leave the stage when I am forty. I tell my mother she must *drag* me off then if I fail to go otherwise. I shall then have been singing in opera for twenty years. Twenty years is enough for any one; it's a dog's life at best."*

* When I heard this, I said to myself, we will wait and see—wait and see! If health and success are still yours Sweet Geraldine, you will be the first and only prima donna who ever abdicated at forty, and also the only human being I

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GERALDINE FARRAR

Miss Farrar's favorite recreation is "*sleep*—and much of it!"

As for books, she likes "everything."

"I read a great deal," she commented. "When I was studying 'Madame Butterfly,' I read everything I could find about the Japanese. I tried to imbue myself with their spirit. I bought up old prints, and pictures, and costumes; I learned how they eat, and sleep, and walk, and talk, and think, and feel. I read books on the subject in French and German, as well as in English."

Incidentally it came out that she memorized this most difficult of operas in fifteen days.

"No, I am never afraid of forgetting my lines." Then, tapping her forehead lightly, she added: "When a thing is once learned, it seems to stick in a certain corner of your brain and stay there."

There was youth and girlishness in her off-hand manner of making this remark. In fact, the artist and girl are constantly alternating in the play of her features, and it is fascinating to watch this hide-and-seek of youth and maturity.

The girl-spirit was uppermost then, as she sank back comfortably in her big armchair, drew up her Frenchy peignoir more snugly about her, and related some of the droll *contretemps* that occur on the opera-house stage.

"The audience never seems to see them, but the most ridiculous things happen, and then it is terrible when you want to laugh, but dare not."

---

know of to plan her life twenty years in advance, steer straight by the compass, reach the goal and then disembark.

I have waited—and I have seen.

In her fortieth year—boldly declared—the great, the adored, our only "Jerry," stepped down from her throne; retired from the Metropolitan, just as she had planned.

This to me is genuine greatness. Unswerving purpose, self-mastery always—these are the qualities that thrill and inspire.

A mention of Lilli Lehman suddenly sobered the conversation. Lilli Lehmann was Geraldine Farrar's teacher—"and a very severe one"—her pupil asserted.

"But she—and all Germans—appreciate *personality*. That is why I have been allowed to develop my own ideas—to be individual. That is, to me, the most interesting part of the art. I am keenly interested in observing life—the expression of people's faces, their way of saying and doing things. Wherever I am, whatever I see, I am always finding something to use in my art.

"I once saw a death—it sounds unfeeling to say it, but I now use the very expression I saw then in the finale of 'Bohème.' "

Geraldine Farrar's realism is a well-known phase of her art. A striking instance is her performance in the last act of "Romeo and Juliet"; she sings almost the entire scene *lying down!* An amazing innovation

"Perhaps it is unusual," she commented, "but the simple repose seems to me more fully to accentuate the sublime and lyric climax of the tragedy."

This is a little rift into the prima donna's viewpoint. She believes that "vocal intensity and dramatic value should so merge one into the other that they produce equalized sincerity of expression and constant changing of color, movement, and sentiment."

"Give your best always; take *Sincerity* for your guide, and *Work*, never-ending, for your master."

This is Geraldine Farrar's creed.

CHAPTER X

"MADAME BUTTERFLY"

BEAUTY of plot and great music are to an opera what fair features and a noble soul are to woman. "Madame Butterfly" possesses these attributes, and has consequently won that instant success which only true beauty, in either art or nature, calls forth.

Very seldom is the story of an opera so intensely thrilling that the original author is borne in mind; but it may be stated as a fact that no one applauds Giacomo Puccini's splendid music without also thinking "All Hail! to John Luther Long," who wrote this strangely tender tragedy.

Distinctly unique as a Grand-Opera setting is the Land of Cherry-blossoms. Never before have the higher harmonies been blended in with embroidered kimonos and chrysanthemum screens. The innovation is delightful, however; refreshing, uplifting, enlarging. By means of great music we are enabled to understand great emotion in the Little Land.

In this opera the hero is the villain, if one may so express it. He is also an American! a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy, and from first to last he seems blandly unconscious of his villainy. This is distressing morally, but musically one could wish it no different. As the rainbow-mist rises out of the whirlpool, so the beautiful in art is most often evolved from a maelstrom of sin and tragedy.

A flowered veranda to a tiny house, a lilac-garden that overlooks a far, fair view of Nagasaki, the bright blue

bay and azure sky—this is the opening scene of Puccini's opera.

The brief orchestral prelude is a pretty piece of fugue-work, four-voiced and accurately constructed. A fugue is unusual in Grand Opera, but Puccini has a purpose in everything, and his music is essentially descriptive. The opening conversation in this opera concerns the construction of the tiny villa, and as a fugue is the one music-form suggestive of rules and measurements—a secure foundation and precise superstructure—it is clear that this bit of musical masonry, with its themes overlapping but carefully joined, is intended to represent the house.

On the stage the dainty dwelling is glowingly described by *Goro,* a Japanese marriage-broker, very obsequious in manners, but characterized in the orchestra by a most energetic, business-like theme that follows him around like a shadow.

A wedding of his arranging is soon to take place, and this house has been rented for the honeymoon. The bridegroom, Lieutenant *Pinkerton,* of the U. S. Navy, is viewing the abode for the first time. He wears a handsome uniform, and serves the opera as tenor, hero, lover, villain—all in one.

Goro makes him acquainted also with the house-servant, *Susuki;* a solemn-faced, saffron-colored maiden, whose name means "Gentle-breeze-of-the-morning." *Pinkerton* prefers to call her "Scarecrow."

The first invited guest to arrive is the U. S. *Consul.* A sympathetic and genuinely tender theme announces this character's approach. Always listen to the orchestra if you would know the real nature of these people of the play. In Grand Opera, as in real life, *words* very often conceal thought; but by the power of music the

listener is endowed with a temporary sense of omniscience: he can read the hearts and motives of the creatures he observes.

It being still early, *Pinkerton* and the *Consul* seat themselves while the hero explains this marriage he is entering upon. But first he orders a "whisky and soda."

There is apparently no translation for this barroom barbarism, so the English words are used, and their effect is noticeably jarring. No critic has failed to remark this surprizing début of fire-water on the lyric stage! There is charm and poetry in the Italian wine-glass, and we have grown accustomed to see that mingled with melody—but the American whisky-bottle stands remote from music as a pig from Paradise. Puccini seems to realize this, for he accompanies the obnoxious word with a discord!

There is nothing discordant, however, in *Pinkerton's* description of his bride—the lovely lady *Butterfly*—"dainty in stature—quaint little figure—seems to have stepped down, straight from a screen."

The music here is delicate and frail, like an exquisite tracery of gold lacquer.

He intends to marry this Japanese bride in Japanese fashion, thereby making the tie unbinding in America—a slip-knot adjustment that she, poor thing, is unaware of.

The *Consul* remonstrates with *Pinkerton* over his "easy-going gospel" of free love, but this light-hearted villain will not listen. He holds up his glass instead, and to a buried accompaniment of the "Star-spangled Banner," he proposes a toast to America—and also to the day on which he shall wed in *real* marriage a *real* wife of his own nationality.

With this atrocious toast scarcely uttered, poor little

trusting *Butterfly* is heard in the distance with her bridesmaids, singing as they approach. A delirium of joy breathes through this song, which is a weird succession of Oriental intervals, strange as an opium dream. As the harmonies grow firmer, *Butterfly's* voice rings out above the others, while in the orchestra the conductor with his baton slowly unearths, like a buried diamond, the great love-theme of the opera. It beams forth in sultry splendor, a cluster of chords with imprisoned tones that flash forth unlooked-for harmonies.

At last she enters—this Japanese heroine, her brilliant draperies as bright as her name. Her maidens all carry huge paper parasols and fluttering fans—a merry group of girls, filled with varied emotions of timidity, envy, curiosity, and fun. They courtesy, and smile, and sing and sigh, and lower their eyes with knowing charm.

Throughout this scene it is interesting to note the different themes and their consistent use. A phrase of the opening fugue invariably appears whenever the *house* is mentioned; still another architectural motif protrudes into prominence every time the town Nagasaki is referred to. *Susuki* has a theme of her own; so has the *Consul.* When the relations of the bride troop in, we recognize the fact that they, too, have a theme; we learned it when *Goro,* some time back, was enumerating the expected guests.

This theme now asserts itself in the orchestra as the grotesque company assembles. There is nothing great about this melody: it is a mincing, thin-bodied affair, but disports itself with much confidence during its little hour of importance; it shoves out every other theme from the orchestra and demands undivided attention. But at last the director's stick chases it out of the enclosure.

The guests in the meantime have been gossiping among themselves, disparaging the bride, criticizing the groom—and partaking of his refreshments.

All flats and sharps and accidentals are suddenly dropped from the score when the official registrar reads in monotone voice, and plain *C* major, the simple marriage form.

The ceremony is soon over, but the guests linger on. *Pinkerton* plies them with wine, but makes little headway in hurrying the festivities to an end. He has grown heartily tired of these new relations, and longs to see them go, but, instead of any one leaving, another one suddenly arrives, an absent uncle, who plunges amongst them in a frenzy of wrath and excitement. He has learned at the American Mission that *Butterfly,* without telling her family, has changed her religion and cast off the faith of her fathers.

Cries of horror, moans, and execrations follow this announcement. *Butterfly* is denounced by her family—abjured and disowned. She cowers before them, distressed, but not utterly crushed, for love remains to console her.

The tragic theme of the opera; a gruesome sequence of minor thirds, takes this opportunity to stalk into the orchestra and reconnoiter, like an undertaker looking over the premises before he is really needed. This theme has active work to do later on, but as yet does not seem very terrifying.

When the relations and guests are gone, *Butterfly* is soon persuaded to forget the "stupid tribe."

Evening has come; there is a twilight tinge to the music; it is *dolce, expressione,* and *rallentando.*

Puccini is a master of modulations. He employs large,

full harmonies—soul-asserting, all-engulfing chords—that feel their way from one key to another, and burst forth in new glory with every transition. This persistent progress through varying keys has an effect of leading the listener through different rooms in some palatial edifice. In the hands of a great composer, each key of the scale unlocks a new vista in the enchanted palace of music.

Behind a screen on the veranda, *Butterfly* changes her chromatic kimono to one of white silk. She emerges with garments all soft and fluttering, like the trembling white wings of a night-moth.

Pinkerton leads her into the garden, and there, under the spell of the silent stars, they sing of love and of the glorious mystic night, with its gentle breeze that passes like a benediction over the bending lilacs. Fireflies (cleverly imitated) hover in the air and flicker faintly, like candles in a distant chancel. The conductor waving his wand, like a priest the swinging censor, evokes a wreathing mist of music that enwraps the lovers in a drapery of dreams.

Melodies and harmonies rise into being and pass away like fantoms floating by, until at last the great love-theme of the opera once again is flashed upon us. The *diamond,* scarce revealed before, is now in its proper setting. It is displayed in solemn glory by the dignitary at the desk, who, with upraised, swaying hands, holds aloft this precious theme, as a priest does the sacred emblem.

Act II pictures the interior of *Butterfly's* house.

There is desolation in the home; the orchestra tells us this, for the tragic theme possesses the instruments, creeping around among them, serpent-like, and enfolding them in its coils.

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FARRAR AS "MADAME BUTTERFLY"

The rising curtain reveals *Susuki* kneeling before a shrine; she is praying that *Pinkerton* may return.

Three times have the dragon-kites swelled in the breeze and the peach trees flushed into bloom since the day he sailed away.

Her prayer abounds in strange and uncouth harmonies that wail themselves into silence. When the incantation is finished, an orchestral phrase of keen despair and tortured hope accompanies *Butterfly* as she enters and pitifully asks: "How soon shall we be starving?"

Susuki counts over the few remaining yen, and expresses doubt about *Pinkerton's* return. Again that same theme of anguish pierces the air like a knife as *Butterfly* shrieks out: "Silence!" She will not listen to doubt. She insists that he will return, and she fondly adds, "he will call me again his tiny child-wife, his little Butterfly!"

With this memory there is a momentary return of the great love-theme in the orchestra; tender and fleeting, like a smile on the face of the dying.

Butterfly sings of the radiant hour, some day, when they shall see "in the distance a little thread of smoke," and then "a trim, white vessel," flying the American flag!

The music of this aria has a confident ring and a forward swing, like a great ship nearing shore. Large and splendid is the final climax:

"He will return—I know!"

A familiar theme in the orchestra heralds the approach of the U. S. *Consul.* He brings a letter from *Pinkerton* which he wishes *Butterfly* to hear, but Japanese politeness interferes for some time. He must accept tea and wine, a pipe to smoke, and a cushion to sit on. He is questioned about his health and the health of his honor-

able ancestors. His own "Augustness" is profusely welcomed.

Scarcely have these formalities been accomplished when another visitor arrives—a pompous personage, accompanied by servants who bring presents and flowers. He comes to persuade *Madame Butterfly* that her husband's absence amounts to a divorce, and that he, *Prince Yamadori,* should be accepted as *Pinkerton's* successor.

This energetic woer, lemon-faced and almond-eyed, imparts to the music a spicy flavor, grotesque and Japanese. His brief, breezy phrases have a turn and tang that belongs entirely to the Land of Nippon; staccato suggestions of chop-sticks and oolong.

The hostess politely declines to listen to her elaborate suitor.

She busies herself pouring tea, while in the orchestra a delightfully tender, untroubled waltz-theme reflects her tranquil spirit, which is like some quiet mountain pool in the path of a coming avalanche.

Impending disaster is near. *Pinkerton's* letter contains news that will bring devastation to the little Japanese home. He is coming back—but not to see *Butterfly;* a new wife comes with him.

The *Consul* waits until *Yamadori* has gone, then bravely tries to read the letter, but his eager listener is too excited to hear to the end.

"He is coming!" That is enough! Her joy is unbounded. She speeds from the room and in a moment returns with a sunny-haired child on her shoulders—her "baby-boy!"—her "noble little American!"—to whom she tells the glad news that his father soon will return.

The distressed *Consul* has not the heart to enlighten her further. He leaves rather abruptly.

A moment later a signal gun is heard in the distance. *Susuki* plunges in, breathless—"The harbor cannon!" Both women rush to the window. They can see the ship! A man-of-war! The Stars and Stripes!

Oh, the pain of this joy! The audience, knowing all, is torn and racked with emotion as the orchestra reiterates *Butterfly's* recent song of confidence about "his sure return."

Now is her "hour of triumph!" She proclaims it to high heaven—to *Susuki*—and to all "the eight hundred thousand gods and goddesses of Japan."

All the world had told her he would forget and never return—but she knew!—she knew! Now, at last, her faith triumphs—he is here!

Superb is the crescendo now sweeping upward on the crest of America's martial theme. The Star-Spangled Banner is bugled by the instruments, while *Butterfly's* voice, in high and jubilant accord, sings again the glad words: "He is here!—he loves me!"

In the orchestra the love-theme—the great theme—arises slowly and passes by like a spirit of the past, a soul long dead, a memory faded.

Now follows a poetic scene unsurpassed for picturesque charm and grace.

In accordance with Japanese custom, the two women sprinkle the room with flowers, in honor of the master's home-coming.

Great baskets full of blossoms are brought in by *Susuki,* while *Butterfly,* always singing, showers the room with petals. She sways with the rhythm of joy and music, flinging the flowers in reckless profusion, her voice seeming to follow their flight—up in the air—and down again.

Susuki, too, scatters rainbow-clouds of jasmine, peach-blooms, and violets; her contralto voice at the same time giving depth of color to the music. In the orchestra dainty fluttering phrases are lightly tossed about, as tho shaken from the instruments by a passing breeze.

Full of strange involutions and harmonies, the music of this "flower-duet" possesses the essential quality of all that is lasting and classic—hidden beauty beneath the obvious. With the choicest mixing of harmony, orchestra and voice, Puccini has brewed a blend most rare, and sugared it with melody.

When the baskets are emptied and the last flower fallen, a few final notes of the refrain still left in the orchestra are hurriedly brushed out by the conductor's baton.

On the stage, as the daylight melts into dusk, *Butterfly,* all in a flurry, is decking herself in her wedding gown, while the orchestra calls up memories of the lilac-garden and the fireflies.

When all is ready, *Butterfly, Susuki,* and the little one take positions at the window.

Long and patiently they watch and wait.

The orchestra plays a soft, unchanging staccato accompaniment. The moonlight finds its way into the room.

At last the maid and the child fall asleep. Not so with *Butterfly;* rigid and still she stands at the window, her eyes on the distant harbor-lights.

A sound of far-away voices softly humming a sad, weird refrain, fills the scene with mystery, suggesting the moan of guardian spirits. All this while the gentle staccato harmonies in the orchestra continue to flit back and forth, like the changing lights of swinging lanterns.

Butterfly does not move. The curtain slowly descends.

The prelude to the last act opens with a theme that crashes and tears its way into prominence: a pitiless, gruesome group of notes, that sounds vaguely familiar, tho it has never been emphasized like the tragic-theme and others gone before. In the first act this dire phrase was heard for a moment, buried softly among the harmonies that accompanied *Butterfly's* first entrance song. She was happy then, but, nevertheless, this germ of agony was lurking near, as tho to suggest that we, each one, carry within our own temperament the weakness or fault that will eventually lead us to grief.

The orchestra is kept very active during this prelude or intermission. The past is presented in flashes of old themes, and the coming day is presaged by new phrases of potent meaning. Sounds of the harbor life beginning to stir, distant voices of sailors chanting, are heard even before the curtain rises. When this is lifted, behold poor *Butterfly* still at her post! All night she has watched and waited, never moving, never doubting.

Now the dawn, cruel, cold-eyed and leering, begins to peer through the window. The pale, frail figure in her wedding gown still does not move; she still hopes on, counting the stars as they disappear; measuring each moment by her heart's wild beating.

The dawn grows rosy, the music in the orchestra tells of the world's awakening. The sun's glad welcome is proclaimed in a resounding pæan of harmonies, pierced with sharp, bright strokes from the triangle.

But all this brilliant daybreak music fails to modify the tragedy of the dawn.

Susuki awakens to despair, but poor little *Butterfly* still asserts, "He'll come! He'll come!"

When urged by the maid to rest, she takes the little

one up in her arms, soothing him gently with a quiet song as she mounts the stairs to her sleeping-room.

Scarcely has she gone, when *Susuki* is startled by a knock at the door. *Pinkerton* has come—and the *Consul* with him, but they tell the maid not to summon her mistress—not yet.

The music of the flower-duet fills the air like a faint perfume as *Pinkerton* observes the withered blossoms, and *Susuki* explains the decorations and tells of *Butterfly's* weary vigil. A moment later she sees through the window a lady waiting in the garden.

It is *Pinkerton's* wife.

"Hallowed souls of our fathers! The world is plunged in gloom!"

Susuki falls prostrate on her knees.

The ensuing trio is a magnificent musical unfoldment of sympathy from the *Consul,* remorse from *Pinkerton,* and consternation from *Susuki.* It is a splendid mingling of emotion and melody.

The two men are left alone as the maid goes out to speak with the new wife. *Pinkerton* acts properly distressed over the situation, and his friend, being only human, can not refrain from saying, "I told you so," whereupon the music of his warning remonstrance in the first act is plainly marked in the orchestra, like an underscoring to written words.

Pinkerton sighs over the room and its associations, sheds a few tears, and then decides the strain is too great for him. As he leaves the house, his wife and *Susuki* walk into view at the window.

At this moment *Butterfly* comes rushing down the stairs; she has heard voices—"he is here!"

Susuki tries to ward off the evil moment, but the *hour*

has struck. The tragic theme rises up supreme—revealing itself in unclothed hideousness: all the other themes have fallen away; they were as mere empty masks over the face of truth—behind life is always death—back of the smile is a skeleton.

Through the open window *Butterfly* sees the "other woman."

"Who are you?" Mechanically her lips frame the words, as she stands there, paralyzed—stunned. But the question was perfunctory; the explanations that follow only confirm what she knew at first sight.

Very gently the American wife proposes to *Butterfly* to adopt her child and bring him up as her own.

The Japanese mother listens dumbly—then slowly realizes that unless she consents to this plan her boy will have no name.

Butterfly says very little—but she accedes. She asks however, that *Mr. Pinkerton* himself shall come for the child. "Come in half an hour—in half an hour."

Agreed to this, the *Consul* and the American lady go away.

Susuki is now quietly ordered to leave the room. She protests, but her mistress is firm; she wishes to be alone.

When the weeping maid has gone, *Butterfly* lights a lamp at the little shrine and bows before it. Then she takes from the wall a dagger, but drops this as the baby suddenly enters, shoved in by *Susuki*—faithful slave! who, forbidden to enter herself, thus blindly tries to frustrate *Butterfly's* ominous wish to be alone.

The child rushes to its mother's arms, and *Butterfly* clasps it wildly, calling it all the extravagant love-names Japanese fancy can devise.

" 'Tis for you, my love, that I am dying!"

She holds him at arm's-length and bids him look lon and well upon her face. The baby tosses his head an laughs; he little recks what she is saying:

"Take one last look on your mother's face, that th memory may linger."

The tragic theme attains a grandeur now that makes i seem the apotheosis of human heart-ache. Through th alembic of the composer's art this gruesome them emerges ablaze with a terrible glory. It sweeps apas like a fiery chariot, bearing poor little *Butterfly's* soul t heaven.

There is little more to record; the moment of deat seems already gone through in bidding the child good by. What follows is done very quietly; every move ment is lifeless and spiritless. She ties a bandage abou the little one's eyes, and she puts in his hand an America flag; the Japanese mother's token of surrender.

Then *Butterfly* picks up the dagger. The deed is soo done; she totters to the floor, and with her last breat tries to reach for her baby's hand.

NELLIE MEI BA

CHAPTER XI

MELBA, THE AUSTRALIAN NIGHTINGALE

A MEMORABLE performance of "Aïda" was given in London, at Covent Garden, a number of years ago. The Ethiopian slave-girl, dark-tinted and slight of figure, attracted no particular attention with her first unimportant recitative notes. The audience was diverted by the fine tenor singing, the excellent contralto, and the well-drilled work of the chorus. There followed more of this ensemble, more good orchestral playing, and then an effect of melody, or rhythm, or something—that gradually caused every pulse to quicken, and stirred every soul in a strange, unaccountable way, until suddenly we realized that it was not the rhythm, or the harmony, or the tenor, or the orchestra, but *one soprano voice,* whose tones seemed to penetrate all space and soar to all heights and thrill all hearts in a manner that was overpowering!

The slave-girl was singing! A new star from the Southern Hemisphere was just beginning to appear in the North! A *"new name"* had been added, and was soon to be heard by "all who had an ear to hear"—Melba, the Australian Nightingale.

All critics agree that the quality of her voice has never, in the annals of music, been surpassed.

In furnishing Melba her name, which is a diminutive of Melbourne, the far continent has sprung into a musical prominence it never before attained. From a land at the outer edge of the world, a sovereign of song has arisen.

It would, of course, be artistic and effective to picture Melba's early life as one of struggle and privation. But, search as one will, not a crust or a tatter turns up in her history; She never shivered on a doorstep, or sang for pennies in the street! Let the dismal truth be told—her father was wealthy, and his gifted daughter never lacked for anything.

Nellie Mitchell, as she was known in those days, was gifted not only with a voice, but with a splendid determination to work. She practised diligently all the time in the line of her ambition, and learned to play admirably on the piano, violin, and pipe-organ. All this in spite of the diversions and enticements of young companions and monied pastimes. Wealth, as well as poverty, may serve to hinder progress, and it is much to Melba's credit that she had the perseverance to work unceasingly.

Even at school, during recess hours, she was always humming and trilling. This latter trick was a source of puzzling delight to her comrades, who never tired of hearing "that funny noise she made in her throat." The marvelous Melba trill, you see, was a gift of the gracious Fates at her birth—just back of the silver spoon in her mouth was tucked a golden trill.

The story of her childhood is best told in her own words:

"My mother was an accomplished amateur musician, and it was her playing that first gave me an idea of the charms of music. I was forever humming everything I heard, and she was always telling me to stop, for my noise was unceasing! My favorite song was 'Coming Thro' the Rye.' I also liked 'Nellie Bly,' because my own name was Nellie!"

Incidentally, it was learned that dolls were tabued by this prima donna in pinafores.

"I hated dolls. My favorite toys were horses—wooden horses. One given to me by my father's secretary was almost an idol to me for years."

Recurring to the subject of music, Mme. Melba continued:

"I didn't *sing* much when a child; I only *hummed*. And by the way, a child's voice should be carefully guarded. I consider the ensemble singing in schools as ruinous to good voices. Each one tries to outdo the other, and the tender vocal cords are strained and tired. I, personally, did not seriously study singing until after my marriage at seventeen years of age."

The preparation required for Mme. Melba's career was neither very long nor arduous. She studied nine months with Marchese, then was ready to make her début in Brussels as a star.

All things came easy to her, because her voice never had to be *placed;* her tones were jewels already set.

"The first opera I ever heard was 'Rigoletto.' That was in Paris, when I was studying. What did I think of it? Well, I dare say my inexperience made me very bumptious, but I remember thinking I could do it better myself ! In Australia I had no chance to hear operas. 'Lucia' I have never yet heard, tho that is perhaps the rôle most associated with my name."

"Lucia" has, indeed, become a Melba possession. The mad-scene alone, on a program with her name, would invariably crowd the house. It is a veritable frolic to hear her in this aria. She is pace-maker, as it were, to the flute, which repeats every phrase that she sings. It is the prettiest race ever run, and when at the finish the

time-keeper brings down his baton, the audience cheers itself hoarse for the winner.

When asked her opinion of the new gramophones and the wonderful records of her voice, Madame Melba spoke with enthusiasm.

"They are, indeed, a remarkable achievement. I am looking, however, for still greater improvements, and am keenly interested in every new development."

A matter of "keen interest" it must, indeed, be to every prima donna of to-day—this amazing, magic trumpet that can record the subtle individual quality of a singer's voice, and give it gloriously forth again when desired. By means of this weird invention, the present vintage of fine voices can be bottled up like rare wine, and poured out in future years. More wonderful still: like the "widow's cruse," this trumpet never grows empty; from its uptilted mouth the flow of song will stream on continuously, if so desired and directed. It is enough to make poor Jenny Lind and other long-silent singers grieve and groan in their graves: they died too soon to profit by the powers of this recording trumpet—which surely has no rival save the one that Gabriel blows.

Some further random questions about the experiences of a prima donna elicited the following item. Mme. Melba smiled as she told it:

"Yes, I have some queer things said to me. Just recently a young girl of eighteen, who wished me to hear her sing, assured me that there were only two fine voices in the world to-day—hers and mine!

"But I must tell you," she added brightly, "the most graceful compliment ever paid me. It was by an Irish woman, who, in commenting on the lack of song in the native birds of Australia, pointed out that they had

treasured up all their melody through the ages and then had given it to me."

Some one has said, "The ease of Melba's singing is positively audacious!" She certainly makes light of the most time-honored difficulties. She will start a high note without any preparation, with apparently no breath and no change of the lips. Faint at first as the "fabric of a dream," it is followed by the gradual grandeur of a glorious tone, straight and true as a beam of light, until finally it attains the full zenith of a crescendo.

In a bewildering variety of ways writers have attempted to describe the wonder of her voice.

"It seems to develop in the listener a new sense; he feels that each tone *always has been* and *always will be.* She literally lays them out on the air."

"Her *tone-production* is as much a gift as the voice itself."

After all, "she is Melba, the incomparable, whose beauty of voice is only equaled by the perfection of her art."

"In future years the present time will be referred to, musically, as 'in the days of Melba.'"

Like all great prima donnas, Madame Melba has a beautiful home of her own, and a country place to which she hies in the summer. Her town house is near Hyde Park, London.

Once we imagined these song-birds, during the hot months, resting luxuriantly in their various retreats—Melba in her river residence, Calvé in her French château, Jean de Reszke on his Polish estate, Eames in her Italian castle, and Patti at "Craig y Nos." But it is hardly an accurate picture, for *rest* to the artist still means *work.* They study all summer, every one of them, and entertain

other artists, who work with them, or, at any rate, contribute to the perpetual whirl of music in which they live.

A very good idea of the home life of these song-queens was given to me by a young lady who sojourned with one of them for several months.

"Do you know," she said, "it was positively depressing to be near so much talent and genius. Why, in the drawing-room they would be talking seven or eight languages; and some one would improvise at the piano, while another would take a violin and join in with the most wonderful cadenzas, and then, perhaps, the piano-player would step aside and some one else would slide into his place and continue the improvisation the first one had begun; and so on all the time, until really I began to feel just about as small and worthless as a little pinch of dust."

CHAPTER XII

"LAKMÉ"

LAKMÉ was one of Patti's most successful rôles, and very few other singers have ventured to attempt it. But Madame Melba has sung it, and her performance, while not obliterating all memory of Patti, has certainly made indelible the memory of Melba.

"Lakmé" is composed by Delibes. This name at once recalls that exquisite "pizzicato" from the ballet "Sylvia," a musical fragment that has floated around the world and stuck to the programs of every land. The same delicate fancy and witchery that characterize the ballet are also prominent in the opera. His style is perhaps the furthest removed from Wagner of any modern composer. "Lakmé" has no crescendo worth mentioning, and the themes are, for the most part, left to take care of themselves; but every phrase is fascinating, and there is never a tedious passage.

The prelude opens in the minor key with a group of octaves erect and solemn as pine trees. The next phrase starts up like a blue flame darting from obscurity—a fantastic measure with wild harmonies that plainly suggest India as *Lakmé's* home. A pathetic wail from the flute offsets this elfish interlude; the gloom of the minor still hangs over all, and the persistent tremolo of the violins becomes oppressive as the perfume of magnolias. It is like a forest at midnight. Suddenly the gloom and stillness are dispersed by the love-theme of the opera, which is in the major key, and consequently has a puri-

fying effect. Major and minor are the oxygen and nitrogen of musical atmosphere.

A peculiar, rhythmical beating of the triangle accompanies the rising of the curtain, which reveals a luxuriant garden enclosed by a bamboo fence. At the back is a little river, and a modest dwelling stands on the bank; but a pretentious idol at one side characterizes the place as a sanctuary. Day is breaking, and as the light increases those soft, metallic tones of the triangle penetrate the air—like sunbeams. *Nilakantha,* a Brahmin priest and owner of the dwelling, comes forward with two slaves, who open the bamboo gates, admitting a group of Hindu devotees, who prostrate themselves before the idol. Beneath the radiance of those unceasing triangle tones arises a languid prayer, soft as the gray morning mist, after which *Nilakantha* addresses the worshippers. He refers to their recent English conquerors, who have "displaced our gods and devastated our temples." His tones mount higher and ring out with religious ecstasy until he causes a sudden hush. The music of invisible harps fills the air, and as the Hindus again kneel a woman's voice, like a clarion call, renders an incantation that is rare and wondrous. It sounds like the song of an angel, but it is only *Lakmé,* the Brahmin's daughter. She comes forward and mingles her prayer with those of the people. Weird and strange, like the tones of a wild bird; her voice soars above the chorus, filling the air with reckless trills and soft staccatos. The worshippers arise and go out, leaving *Lakmé* and her father alone. She is a "child of the gods," and her life is dedicated to Brahma. *Nilakantha* declares it is her pure influence that protects their sacred abode from the enemy. He leaves her for a time in charge of *Mallika,* a trusty slave.

When he is gone the music assumes a lighter mood, while mistress and maid look about for diversion. After removing her temple jewels and placing them upon a stone table, *Lakmé* proposes a row on the river. The music of this scene is fraught with a tropical heat and midday languor—dreamy, drowsy violin tremolos that suggest the drone of bees. The two maidens begin a duet whose words—

"Ah, we'll glide
With the tide—"

are set to music that seems to sing itself. It is a fountain of melody with flowing rhythm and rippling runs, staccatos like drops of water, and trills that are light as bubbles. The singers step into the boat, and we hear their song far down the stream, soft as a shadow and lovely as a dream.

After a moment's silence a new element comes forward—a party of English sightseers. Their appearance in Grand Opera seems to us as much an invasion as their presence in India does to the Hindu. After the costume of *Lakmé,* which is all spangles and bangles and gauze and fringe, we are astonished to see the modern English waistcoats, fashionable bonnets, and trailing skirts. But it is all compatible with facts and history. *Gerald* is an officer in the army; *Ellen,* his fiancée, is a daughter of the Governor; the other couple are their friends, and *Mrs. Benson* is the chaperone.

To enter this enclosure, the party have had to force an opening in the bamboo. It is evident trespassing, but they are too unconcerned to care. Their first rollicking ensemble is an interesting evidence of the composer's ability to change from the Hindu to the English type.

Instead of weird, uncivilized cadenzas, these are plain, Christianlike harmonies, such as we have been brought up to and can anticipate. Indeed, this song recalls Arthur Sullivan in his best mood.

After inspecting the idol and various points of interest, the party discover *Lakmé's* jewels. *Ellen* admires their workmanship, and *Gerald* proposes to sketch them; but *Mrs. Benson* urges the party away. They all go excepting *Gerald,* who insists on copying the jewels. He prepares his sketching materials and is apparently in haste; but true to the precepts of Grand Opera, he first sings to us a long and beautiful aria about "taking the design of a jewel."

By the time he has sustained the last high tone through five measures, *Lakmé* and *Mallika* have finished their row upon the river. *Gerald* conceals himself behind a shrub as they enter. The undulating melody of their boat-song is played by the orchestra, first softly, then with increasing strength, until it ends with a sforzando chord as the boat touches shore.

Lakmé brings forward an armful of flowers as an offering to the idol, and she sings a tender little song whose pathetic melody belies the text, which constantly asserts, "I am happy." The accompaniment is a simple violin arpeggio, swaying back and forth upon the melody like a butterfly on a flower. Between the verses it flutters up in a fanciful cadenza, but soon returns, and, alighting on the melody, it continues to sway as before.

Great is *Lakmé's* indignation on perceiving *Gerald,* the intruder. As she goes toward him, her every step is emphasized by a resolute chord in the orchestra.

"Leave at once!" she commands. "This ground is sacred, and I am a child of the gods!"

But *Gerald* has fallen hopelessly in love with the pretty priestess, and he loses no time in telling her. No one has ever dared thus to address *Lakmé,* and she is incensed at his boldness. She warns him that death will be the penalty of his rash trespassing unless he goes at once. But *Gerald* only repeats his sweeping song of infatuation.

At last, moved to admiration by his courage, *Lakmé* ventures to ask by what god is he inspired. Like ripples of sunlight are the next measures, wherein he tells her that the God of Love makes him fearless.

Interested in this new deity, the Hindu maiden repeats after him the sparkling words and music. She sings timidly and a tone too low, but *Gerald* leads his ready pupil into the right key, and they sing together with full voice this most fascinating melody. The final rapturous tone has scarcely subsided when *Lakmé* hears her father approach.

Complying with her entreaties, *Gerald* departs just in time for *Nilakantha* to perceive the broken fence. He vows vengeance upon the profane foe who has dared to enter here. His followers second the cry, while *Lakmé* stands aside in fear and trembling.

Tambourines and fifes predominate in the next orchestral prelude. It is a miniature *marche militaire,* and unmistakably English. The second act discloses a public square filled with Indian shops and bazaars. It is the occasion of a great festival at the pagoda. Merchants and promenaders occupy the stage, and their opening chorus is all bickering and bargaining. The music is very ingenious. A free use of harmonic discords, dazzling scales that seem to clash with their bass, and chromatics that run into each other gives an effect of

Oriental extravagance—gay colors upon crumbling walls, jewels over rags.

The chorus continues until a bell announces the beginning of the festival and time for the venders to disperse. They slowly depart and give place to the ballet, without which Delibes would hardly be himself.

It is interesting to note the specialties that different composers unconsciously assume. Liszt seemed to revel in rhapsodies; while the alliteration, "Schubert's Songs," comes uppermost in spite of our knowledge that he wrote some eleven hundred other compositions. Bach invented more fugues than any one else; while Handel made his most lasting impression with oratorios. Symphonies and sonatas were the life-work of Beethoven; while Chopin had a particular fancy for nocturnes. And Mendelssohn! With all deference to his greater works, it must be conceded that "Songs Without Words" are inseparably linked with his name. Verdi with his tremendous range of operas had little time for anything else. The list could be extended to almost any length; but we will only add that Czerny is known for his scale exercises and Kullak for his octaves; while Weber, in the language of a recent critic, "is famous because he invited all the world to waltz!"

But to return to Delibes and his ballets. The present one is divided into several movements—the first being slow but of throbbing rhythm, while in the second one the melody whirls and spins around like a top. It is constantly whipped up by the conductor's baton, and the dizzy pace continues until this merry melody bumps against a substantial chord.

After the ballet *Lakmé* and her father come forward. They are disguised as pilgrim mendicants, the better to

enable *Nilakantha* to seek out his foe. It must be understood that this Hindu thirst for vengeance is a matter of religious belief, and the music plainly impresses this fact. A weird theme that was prominent in the overture recurs as *Nilakantha* explains that the wrath of heaven must be appeased with the blood of a victim. He has cleverly surmised that *Lakmé* was the attraction inducing the stranger to trespass on sacred ground. Confident that every one will attend this great festival, the Brahmin has brought his daughter as a decoy. She plays the rôle of a street ballad-singer, and is at the merciless command of her father. He bids her look gay and sing with full voice so as to attract a crowd. The orchestra gives her the keynote, and then, like a necromancer performing wonders with a coin, she executes a cadenza that bewilders and dazzles the senses. Her tones soar away like carrier-birds, and they bring the people from far and near to hear the wondrous singing. When a crowd has collected, *Nilakantha* announces that she will sing to them the "Legend of the Pariah's Daughter." *Lakmé* sings as easily as she talks. The first phrase is a simple little narrative about a maiden wandering at eve in the forest, fearless of beast and sprite, for she carries in her hand a little bell that wards off evil with its merry tinkling. Then follows one of the most difficult staccato fantasias in existence, for the voice imitates the tinkle of that silver bell. The tones fall fast as raindrops in a shower, round as beads and clear as crystal. The composer shows no respect or reverence for high notes. Upper *B* is given a "shake" and any amount of staccato raps, while even high *E,* that slumbering "spirit of the summit," is also aroused to action. In fact, this aria is one of the few that can not be poorly sung. To do it at

all argues doing it well. Its difficulties protect it like a barricade from attack by mediocre singers. The second verse relates how the maiden meets a stranger, who is saved from the surrounding wolves by the tinkle of her magic bell. This stranger was "great Vishnu, Brahma's son"; and since then—

"In that dark wood
The traveler hears
Where Vishnu stood
The sound of a little bell ringing."

Soft and clear as a wood-nymph laughing, those marvelous staccatos again peal forth.

During his daughter's performance *Nilakantha* has been scanning the faces around him, but none reveals any emotion other than the pleasure of listening. Furious that his plan has not succeeded, he bids *Lakmé* to sing it again—"Louder!" But she has suddenly perceived *Gerald* approaching; and, knowing that if he recognizes her he will betray himself, she does not wish to sing. She pleads and entreats, but her father is obdurate. So she begins with pouting lips and trembling voice. "Sing out!" admonishes *Nilakantha.* As *Gerald* draws nearer, *Lakmé* becomes more and more disturbed. The pretty staccatos are all out of place, like blossoms falling to pieces. They are flat where they should be sharp, and minor instead of major; but her tones, like perfect petals, are none the less lovely because detached. Once, twice, three times she recommences, always in a higher key. Suddenly she utters a musical scream as *Gerald* comes up to her, and *Nilakantha* exclaims: "'Tis he!"

In the meantime, *Gerald* hears the fifes and tam-

bourines of his regiment and goes to answer the roll-call.

Nilakantha summons his Hindu followers and informs them that he has discovered the foe. This solo with chorus of the conspirators is minor, *mysterioso,* and *agitato;* it is the most interesting bass solo of the opera. The conspirators go off, leaving *Lakmé* alarmed and disconsolate. Like a faithful hound, *Hadji,* the slave, draws near to her and whispers that he has seen her tears and heard her sighs: "If you have a friend to save, confide in me." His words are *parlando,* but the orchestra illumines them with music clear as a calcium light. *Lakmé* grasps his hand in gratitude, but motions him aside as she perceives *Gerald* thoughtfully returning.

The hero has left his comrades at the first opportunity and retraced his steps to the place where he left *Lakmé.* His joy on finding her is portrayed in a musical greeting of such unbounded rapture that one key will hardly hold it. The ensuing love-duet deserves to rank with the best. But *Lakmé* is more sad than glad, for she knows of impending danger. She urges him to flee, and tells him of "a little cabin hidden in the forest, quite near by," where he can hide secure from his enemies. This Cabin Song is an idyllic refrain, with gentle harmonies that picture more than the words. She urges him to follow her; but in spite of his infatuation, *Gerald* realizes his duty as a soldier. He dare not go.

Like dust before a tempest is the succeeding instrumental passage announcing the approach of the great procession. The notes, like atoms, are carried forward faster and higher, until they come so thick that you can not distinguish them. This cloud of music melts away before the mighty chant of the Brahmins as they march to the pagoda. Their weird incantation fills the air like

a trumpet-blast. The greater part of this processional music greets our ears familiarly, because it was given in the overture. Upon this somber background of Hindu harmonies the composer delights in casting gleams of Sullivanesque music in the form of passing remarks from the English onlookers. The contrast is startling as magic-lantern pictures thrown upon the pyramids.

As the procession marches on, we see *Nilakantha* point out *Gerald* to the other conspirators. They cautiously surround him, and at the bidden moment he is stabbed by *Nilakantha,* who then disappears in the crowd. On hearing the victim's cry, *Lakmé* rushes forward. The stage is darkened, for it is evening, and the lights of the procession are gone. The Hindu maiden finds *Gerald* but slightly wounded. She calls *Hadji,* the slave, and then, without further explanation on her part, the instruments whisper to us her intention. We hear the soothing harmonies of that lovely song about "a little cabin hidden in the forest quite near by."

The second *entr'acte* is performed after the rising of the curtain. We see an Indian forest, dense of foliage and brilliant with flowers. At one side is a hut, half concealed by the shrubbery, and near it are *Lakmé* and *Gerald,* the latter reclining upon a bank, while she watches over him as he slumbers. No sound or movement mars the effect of a perfect picture, and beneath it all, like gold letters spelling out the subject, come the tones of that sweet melody of the Cabin Song. The conductor at his desk reminds us of an artist at his easel who, with a magic brush, traces in tone-colors this beautiful inscription.

After the *entr'acte Lakmé* softly sings a slumber-song, simple as a child's prayer and as beautiful. There are

only two phrases in it, but they come and go like wandering thoughts. When *Gerald* awakes he recalls how he was brought here, while *Lakmé* relates how with wild herbs and the juice of flowers he has been restored. Their rapturous conversation is interrupted by a chorus from without, the voices of young men and maidens on their way to a fountain in the forest from whence, it is said, if two lovers drink they will always be united. *Lakmé* solemnly explains this beautiful belief and at once proposes to bring a cup of the water. "Wait for me," she admonishes as she runs out, and we hear her voice mingle with the far-away chorus of the other lovers.

During her absence a comrade of *Gerald's* discovers his retreat. The newcomer announces that their regiment has orders to move on, and that if *Gerald* does not join them he will be dishonored. This visit passes over like a modern railroad through an Arcadian temple. Poor *Lakmé* soon discovers the devastation. With charming faith she extends her cup of water to *Gerald,* but at this moment he hears the fifes and drums of his regiment. *Lakmé* still offers the cup. "Drink and vow to be mine!" But *Gerald* does not heed her words, for he is distracted with thoughts of duty and honor. She also hears this English music.

"His love is faltering!" she piteously cries; and then with a decision as impulsive as her nature she plucks a flower of the deadly Datura and eats it without being observed by *Gerald.*

She turns to him tenderly and sings of their love—a melody so gentle and pathetic that he can no longer resist. He picks up the fallen goblet, and touching it to his lips vows to love forever. They sing together a song of exaltation.

Suddenly *Nilakantha* breaks in upon them. He brings his followers and would kill *Gerald* at once, did not *Lakmé* rush between them: "If a victim to the gods must be offered, let them claim one in me!" In tones of ecstasy she repeats the final phrase of her love-song; but her voice soon fails, and with a sudden gasp she falls at the Brahmin's feet—dead.

Like hot flames reaching up at him from the orchestra come the tones of his terrible vow-theme. The victim has been offered, but instead of glory, only ashes fall upon him.

CHAPTER XIII

"I PAGLIACCI"

PAGLIACCI is the Italian word for "clowns," a decidedly unique subject for Grand Opera. Novelty is one of the characteristics of this work. It has already achieved fame, altho but a child in age and size, being only a few years old and two acts long. Leoncavallo, the composer and librettist, has since written another opera, "I Medici," which has found favor in Europe, but is still unheard in America.

"Pagliacci" is startling and intense from the Prolog to the clown's last word, "*finita.*" The music abounds in surprizes, and altho Leoncavallo has been charged with some plagiarism, his work but reflects the influence of such recent composers as Wagner and Mascagni.

The opening orchestral measures are of peculiar rhythm, and suggest the spasmodic movement of puppets on a string; but this implies no lack of dignity to the composition. There are passages that recall the "Flying Dutchman," and Leoncavallo adopts the Wagnerian method of handling his themes; in other words, each one has a meaning that is adhered to throughout the opera. In this introduction we hear the warm and sunny love-music, followed by the somber theme of revenge like a shadow after light. Then the puppet-music is hastily resumed, to remind us that a clown must laugh and dance, however bitter his feelings.

During the overture a painted and grotesque personage

steps before the curtain and announces himself as the *Prolog*. This innovation has prompted some wag to remark that "the opera commences before it begins!" Mascagni, in his "Cavalleria Rusticana," was the first to present an unconventional opening, by having a serenade behind the curtain, but Leoncavallo has outdone his rival by having a prolog in front of it. He tells us that the play is taken from life, and that in spite of their motley and tinsel the actors have human hearts. This satisfying song, with its appealing melody and large, resounding accompaniment, has never yet failed to arouse an encore. With a final signal for the play to begin, the *Prolog* skips out as the curtain goes up.

The scene represents an Italian village gaily decorated for the Feast of the Assumption, an annual fête that lasts a week. We see at one side a rough mimic theater, with stage and curtain, a temporary structure erected for a troupe of players who are just entering the town. There are shouting and laughter behind the scenes, sounds of a discordant trumpet and a terrible drum, and soon the villagers enter, vociferously greeting and surrounding a donkey-cart in which are the players. It is a meager troupe, consisting of *Canio,* the master, *Nedda,* his wife, *Peppe,* the harlequin, and *Tonio,* the fool. They wear fantastic costumes. *Canio* beats his big drum, while Nedda scatters play-bills, and the villagers think the troupe quite wonderful. They are welcomed with an impulsive sweeping chorus that seems to disregard all precedent in the matter of keys. These peasants apparently sing in an ungoverned, unrestrained way of their own; but as an Italian's tattered costume is always picturesque, so is this artless music most graceful and charming. *Canio* bows grotesquely on all sides, and again

thumps his drum to make the people listen as he tells them that at seven o'clock the play will begin:

"You all are invited,
And will be delighted
As you witness the woes of poor Punchinello,
Who revenges himself on a rascally fellow."

Canio's professional music, such as the foregoing speech, is made admirably artificial, thin and cheap as tissue paper, with uncertain accompaniment and flimsy melodies.

When the excitement has subsided, *Tonio,* the fool, offers to lift *Nedda from* the cart, but *Canio* boxes his ears and helps his own wife down. The people laugh at *Tonio's* discomfort, and he goes off grumbling. This pantomime action and the succeeding bit of dialog are accompanied by a rollicking, hurdy-gurdy sort of motif in the orchestra. A villager invites the players to a drink in the tavern. *Canio* and *Peppe* accept, and they call *Tonio* to come along, but he replies from behind the mimic theater, "I am cleaning the donkey, and can't come." The villager laughingly suggests that *Tonio* is only waiting for a chance to court *Nedda. Canio* takes this joke rather seriously, and sings an earnest cantabile to the effect that such a game would be dangerous: "On the stage, when I find her with a lover I make a funny speech and every one applauds; but in life—believe me, it would end differently." This last phrase is adapted to the dismal, menacing theme of revenge that was started like a germ in the overture. It is still deeply buried among the instruments, but its growth is steady from the beginning of the opera to the end. *Canio* closes his song

by assuring all that there is no ground for suspicion. He embraces *Nedda,* and declares that he loves and respects her. The hurdy-gurdy music is resumed, and distant bagpipes are heard—noises peculiar to a village fête. The chorus sing with much good humor, and are accompanied by a charming violin obligato. Then comes the Bell Chorus, so named because the church bell calls them to vespers. "Prayers first, and then the play!" exclaim the young people as they go out. The delightful turns and curves of this bell-song are continued until quite in the distance.

Nedda is left alone, and the orchestra, like a merciless conscience, repeats to her *Canio's* threatening theme. She has a secret that causes her to tremble as she recalls her husband's dark looks and words; but her fears are momentary, for the day is bright and so is her heart. She sings to the sunshine and the birds in the sky. A gay tremolo of the stringed instruments seems to fill the air with feathered songsters, and they remind *Nedda* of a little ballad her mother used to croon. This popular ballatella is generally referred to as the Bird Song. There is a busy, buzzing string accompaniment, and the melody is a gentle, legato waltz movement. The last notes are descriptive of a bird's flight "away, away!" so high that the tone seems to soar out of sound as a bird out of sight.

Nedda turns around, and is surprized to find *Tonio* listening with rapt adoration. He is only a jester, and quite ridiculous to look upon; but he nevertheless loves *Nedda,* and tells her so. In this aria, *Tonio* reveals a depth of feeling that is in touching contrast to his painted face and comical clothes. *Nedda* laughs uproariously at his confession, and with heartless sarcasm she quotes the scherzando music of the prospective play-scene, and

says he must save his fine love-making for the stage. In vain *Tonio* pleads and falls on his knees. She threatens to call her husband, and finally snatching up a whip, gives *Tonio* a smart blow on the face. His love is turned to hatred, and he vows vengeance for this insult. He is very much in earnest, and indeed the composer has given him quite a fine vengeance-theme, all his own. It is heard groveling and growling among the bass instruments, like some disturbed animal. *Tonio* goes off with frowns and threats, but *Nedda* forgets these in the joy of seeing *Silvio*. As he cautiously enters—scaling a garden wall to do so—the orchestra announces in the plainest musical phrases that this newcomer is the lover. That theme amoroso is unmistakable even had we not been introduced to it in the prolog. Throughout this love-scene it is the leading spirit, sporting around from treble to bass, now in the orchestra, then in the voice; sometimes veiled in a minor key or suppressed by top-heavy chords; again, it will start to materialize but at once disappear, or when most unexpected will push itself forward with impish delight.

The witchery of this music undermines fear and caution. The lovers do not notice *Tonio's* leering face as he overhears their vows and then goes off to bring *Canio;* nor do they hear the stealthy approach of *Tonio's* revenge in the orchestra. *Nedda* agrees to elope with *Silvio,* "to forget the past and love forever!" He has started to go, has again climbed the low wall when he sings these farewell words with *Nedda*—just in time for *Canio* to hear them. The husband rushes forward with a cry of rage, but he fails to recognize the lover. *Nedda* has warned *Silvio* to flee, and *Canio* scales the wall in pursuit. She is left for a moment with *Tonio,* who gloats

over his revenge. With bitter irony *Nedda* cries "Bravo!" to his success. She calls him a coward and other terrible names, but the despised jester only shrugs his shoulders.

When *Canio* returns from his futile chase, he grasps *Nedda,* tortures her and threatens her, but she will not tell her lover's name. He declares she shall die, and with these words that bitter revenge-theme for the first time blossoms out in the voice part. It is sung and shouted by the maddened *Canio,* while the director's baton swings over the orchestra like a reaper's sickle, gathering in this full-grown theme. *Canio* draws his dagger, but is forcibly restrained by *Peppe,* who tries to reason with his master. "It is time for the play to begin. The people pay their money and must be entertained." *Nedda* is told to go and dress for her part, while *Canio* is advised to restrain his anger until after the play. He allows himself to be persuaded. The others go off to make ready, and he too must soon don the paint and powder. He looks sadly at the little theater, and sings a magnificent aria that attains the uttermost heights of pathos. He must amuse the people while his heart is breaking. He dare not weep as other men, for "I am only a clown." *Canio* goes off sobbing as the curtain descends.

An intermezzo of much beauty and deep feeling is performed by the orchestra between the acts. Its opening measures recall the funeral march of the "Götterdämmerung"—dolorous, heart-weary passages that presently break away with a nervous energy into the cantabile theme of the prolog. This intermezzo is not long, and we are again enlivened by the scene on the stage.

It is evening, "at seven o'clock," and the mimic theater is illumined by gay lanterns. The people are flocking to

the performance, and they drag forward benches and chairs to sit upon. *Tonio* stands at one side of the little stage beating a drum, while *Peppe* blows the trumpet which is still out of tune, and therefore the opening bars of this act are exactly like the rest. These good people make a great rush and fuss in getting their seats, and they sing a simple, hearty refrain about the great event of seeing a play. The original and refreshing chorus that delighted us in the first act is repeated, and we become as excited and eager as the villagers to witness the performance about to take place on that little wooden stage with its cheap red curtain. *Silvio* is among the crowd, and he finds a chance to speak with *Nedda,* as she passes the money-box. He arranges to meet her after the play, and she admonishes him to be careful. After she has collected the money the players go back of the scenes. A little bell is rung, and the wonderful red curtain goes up.

The comedy is called "Columbine and Punchinello," and *Nedda,* who plays the part of Columbine, is discovered sitting by a table. The room is roughly painted and *Nedda* wears some cheap finery, but the people applaud and think it beautiful. The play-music is all angular and grotesque, glaring effects thrown on in splashes like an impressionist painting. It is admirably appropriate, and perhaps the most unique stroke in the opera.

To return to the action of the mimic play. Columbine soliloquizes for a moment about her husband Punchinello, whom she does not expect home until morning. She looks toward the window and evidently expects some one else. The pizzicato tuning of a violin is heard through the window. The player gets his instrument to

the right pitch and then sings a serenade to the "fair Columbine." She would fain receive her adorer, but at this moment the servant (*Tonio*) enters. He looks at Columbine, and with exaggerated music and ridiculous sighs informs the hearers that he loves her, and now that the husband is away he finds courage to get abruptly on his knees. Columbine pays no attention to his love-making, but she accepts the property chicken that he takes from his basket. The village spectators laugh and applaud. The scene on the mimic stage is next enlivened by the lover (*Peppe*), who climbs in through the window, and on seeing the servant promptly takes hold of his ear and shows him out of the room. The spectators, of course, laugh at this and think the whole play very funny. Columbine entertains her lover by giving him a good supper. Their harmonious conversation includes a charming and graceful gavotte melody that is decidedly the gem of this play-music. Its dainty elegance and classic simplicity are worthy of Bach himself.

The servant rushes in upon the supper-scene, and with mock agitation announces that Punchinello is coming. The lover hurries out of the window as the husband enters. It is *Canio,* the real husband, who acts this part, and as he sees *Nedda* at the window he is struck with the similarity of the play to the reality. For a moment the play-music is droppped and we hear the serious love-theme of the opera closely pursued by that bitter wail of revenge that clings and creeps around it like a poison-vine. *Canio* chokes down his grief and bravely tries to go through his burlesque part. A new, jerky little melody accompanies the remarks of Punchinello, and it would be very gay were it not written in the minor, which gives it a touching effect of faint-heartedness.

Punchinello asks Columbine who has been with her, and she replies, "Only the servant." But Punchinello again asks who was the man—"tell me his name." The last words are real, and *Canio* no longer acts a part. *Nedda* tries to keep up the farce, and the serious themes and play-music alternate as the scene goes on. With curses, threats, and entreaties *Canio* tries to learn the name of *Nedda's* lover, and *Silvio*, in the audience, becomes uneasy; but the other villagers only think it is fine acting. When *Canio* at last buries his face in sobs as he recalls how much he loved his wife, the people shout "Bravo!"

Nedda again tries to resume the play. She forces herself to smile and sing the gay gavotte; but this only maddens *Canio* the more. With tones of fury he declares that she shall either die or tell her lover's name. *Nedda* defies him, and her words are sustained by a distorted arrangement of the love-theme, which effect is like seeking concealment behind a skeleton. The music has become as breathless as the situation. *Nedda* tries to escape toward the spectators, but *Canio* holds her, and there follows a piercing shriek. *Nedda* has been stabbed. She falls, and with her dying breath calls "Silvio!" *Canio* turns upon her lover and completes vengeance with a single stroke. The orchestra now trumpets forth, like the expounding of a moral, that poignant theme whose growth and supremacy we have watched. The village spectators are still puzzled, and can hardly believe that the tragedy is real. *Tonio* comes forward and announces in parlando voice that "the comedy is finished!"

"Pagliacci occupies only half an evening, and even when the "Australian Nightingale" and a great tenor were in the cast the public always expected "some more." New Yorkers long ago became spoiled by the great per-

formances given at the Metropolitan Opera House. It was taken as a matter of course that "Don Giovanni" should be given with Lehmann, Sembrich, Nordica, Edouard de Reszke and Maurel, and that "The Huguenots" should have in its cast two great sopranos and the two de Reszkes. We had an idea that a large city like New York should expect nothing less, and were not sure but the European capitals did better. In point of fact, however, when Madame Sembrich used to sing in Berlin the Royal Opera House was crowded by the attraction of her name alone; and the same may be said of Madame Melba in Paris, or Calvé, or any of them. There are rarely more than six or seven great prima donnas in the world at one time, and when one of these sings in Europe the rest of the company is often mediocre. But not so in New York. After "Pagliacci" with one great star, "Cavalleria" with another, is the usual program—a rather unfortunate combination of operas, for they are both so feverishly intense. After the "beautiful horror" of "Pagliacci's" finale, a contrast might be welcome. Gluck's "Orpheus and Eurydice" is a short opera that alongside of Leoncavallo's work would delight the musical epicure. Such an opportunity to study the new and the old would surely be beneficial.

CHAPTER XIV

"ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE"

CLASSIC myth and classic music are in this opera happily united. The beautiful legend belongs to the past but Gluck the composer, like Orpheus the musician, has brought the departed to life. With gentle harmonies he pacified those surrounding Furies, the critics, and his creation has attained a lasting place in the musical world. Simplicity and sincerity stamp the entire composition. The musical thoughts are put down in the plainest, straightest way, in strong contrast to the old Italian style, whose profuse embellishments remind one of ornate penmanship. Gluck lived more than a century ago, but his ideas anticipated many of our modern formulas. He succeeded in imparting a musical individuality to all his characters.

To enjoy Gluck's masterpiece properly, the listener should present himself with a spirit as gentle as the composer. The opera is more idyllic than overpowering. Enjoy it as you would a perfect day in some peaceful, shaded valley.

The overture to "Orpheus and Eurydice" is not remarkable. It bears no theme-feature in common with the opera, and its kinship is only discernible in name and nature, both opera and overture being devoid of ostentation.

The curtain rises upon a Grecian landscape that is beautiful but sad, for amid drooping willows and solemn pines stands the tomb of *Eurydice*. *Orpheus,* the discon-

solate husband, is leaning upon the shrine. Not even his lute can solace him in this hour of grief. From the orchestra a dirge of unrivaled beauty arises like a flower from the earth. It is taken up by the chorus and given as an offering to the departed. There is something mythical about the music as well as the scene. All nature seems to join in this lament over *Eurydice*. Ever and anon *Orpheus* proclaims her name in tones so pitiful that—

> "The rocks and rills and surrounding hills
> Feel pity, and are touched."

He asks the chorus to scatter flowers upon her grave and then leave him alone, for their song but adds to his grief. Accompanied by an orchestral ritornelle of Arcadian simplicity, they strew their garlands and then retire.

The wood-wind and viol follow *Orpheus* in his solitary plaint that again reminds us of the voice of nature. It is a feminine voice, too, a fact worth mentioning, for *Orpheus* is a contralto rôle. After vainly beseeching high heaven and all the gods to restore his lost *Eurydice, Orpheus* decides to brave the realms of *Pluto*. He will himself wrest her from death's power. The gods help those that help themselves, and now *Amor,* the god of love, comes to his assistance. *Amor* says he shall descend in safety to the lower world, and will find his *Eurydice* among the peaceful shades. He must take his lute, and perchance by the power of music he can induce *Pluto* to release her. Was there ever a more charming story for an opera! *Amor* further dictates that while leading *Eurydice* to the upper world he must not look upon her, else all endeavor will have been in vain, and death will at once claim his own. After promising to obey, *Orpheus*

sings a song full of gratitude, with here and there a gleam of gladness like flecks of sunlight after rain. His final aria is the very noontide of joy, dignified always but none the less radiant. Gluck here finds use for colorature—plain, classical scales and broken thirds without any appoggiaturas or even staccatos; but his even-tempoed sixteenth notes seem as gay as Rossini's breathless sixty-fourths.

The second act is the most interesting. It pictures the nether world of Hades. There are vistas of receding caverns full of smoke and flames. Furies and Demons occupy the stage. According to Gluck, the brass instruments furnish the music of Hades, in opposition to the harps, which belong to heaven. The first tones are hurled up by the trumpets like a blast of molten rocks. Then like a balm to all the senses, nectar after poison, incense after sulfur, day after night, come the next celestial harmonies. It is *Orpheus* with his lute, whose harp-tones reach us from afar, as this musician of the gods plays his way through the gates of Hades. For a moment the *Furies* cease their revel, as they wonder what mortal dares to enter here. When they resume their dance the orchestral instruments blow and bow and bob about in a reeling demoniacal medley of scurrying scales and staccatos. Again the *Furies* stop as they see *Orpheus* approaching, and they sing a malediction upon this mortal so audacious. They try to frighten him with howls from the watch-dog *Cerberus,* an effect admirably represented by the instruments. The music is all fearful and threatening, with creeping chromatics shrouded in a minor key.

Orpheus is undaunted; and with enduring faith in the power of his music he takes up his harp and sings to

them of his love for *Eurydice*. Entreating their pity, he begs them to let him pass; but *Cerberus* still howls and the *Furies* shout "No!" They threaten him with eternal torture, but the inspired youth sings on. No punishment they can devise could exceed the grief he already suffers—such is the burden of his song. Even the *Demons* and *Furies* can not long resist such tender strains. With bated breath they wonder what strange unaccustomed feeling steals o'er them, for pity is a new sensation: "The cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears; all Hades held its breath." Three times the wondrous song and accompaniment still the shrieks of *Pluto's* realm. *Orpheus* is finally allowed to pass. The *Furies* and *Demons* hasten to drown their recent emotion in a mad revel that surpasses the first one. This demon-dance is admirably characterized by the music. It has a rapid tempo and a perpetual motion that suggest dancing on hot iron. Tremolos rise and fall like puffs of smoke, while scales like coiling snakes and staccatos like skipping imps add to the effect of pandemonium.

Act III pictures the Elysian fields, the abode of the blest where "calm and eternal rest" pervade even the music. The orchestral introduction is saintly, with its religious harmonies and classic purity. It is simple, but yet so interesting that we can imagine the immortal spirits hearing forever and never weary, for classical music is always new and always beautiful. The flute and stringed instruments perform the great part of this Elysian music. White-robed spirits glide about, and one soprano voice starts up a happy, flowing melody that inspires a chorus of others. It is *Eurydice* who leads this singing of the blessed.

There is dancing as well as singing, and during this

divertissement the instruments weave out a new musical fabric. The steady accompaniment and firm legato theme are the woof and warp through which, around which, and over which a little five-note appoggiatura sports like a weaver's shuttle. It appears four times in every measure, but never twice in the same place.

With wonder and admiration comes *Orpheus* upon the scene. The orchestra continues its blithe harmonies while *Orpheus* sings of the beauteous sight. But not even such surroundings can quell his longing for *Eurydice.* Unlike the *Furies,* who only granted his prayer because compelled by his wondrous music, the spirits of the blessed can not see any one suffer. With one voice and immediately they tell him to take *Eurydice.* To the strains of softest music *Orpheus* approaches the various spirits. He harkens to their heart-beats, and finally recognizes his loved one without seeing her.

The scene changes to another part of the nether world, a forest through which *Orpheus* is leading *Eurydice* back to earth. A nervous, anxious instrumental passage precedes the opening recitative dialog. *Eurydice* at first rejoices over her new-found life, but then forgets all else in surprize and grief because *Orpheus* will not look at her. She questions him, entreats him, fears she is no longer beautiful, or that his heart has changed. *Orpheus* explains that he dare not look at her, but *Eurydice* is not satisfied. She refuses to go farther, for if he can not look at her she does not wish to live. The ensuing duet is intense and full of climacteric effects. The voices chase each other like clouds before a storm, low down and hovering near that sea of sound, the orchestra, over which the conductor rules with his wand like Neptune with his trident.

Orpheus firmly resists the pleadings of *Eurydice* until she declares that his coldness will break her heart—she will die of grief if he does not look at her. Little wonder that he flings prudence to the winds and impulsively turns to embrace her.

But no sooner has he looked upon *Eurydice* than she droops and sinks from his arms like a blighted flower. Death has again come between them. *Orpheus* cries aloud his grief, and there springs from his heart a song of lamentation surpassing any other as a geyser does a fountain. "Ach, ich habe sie verloren!" is the German and "Che in faro" the Italian name of this great song that is the standard classical contralto program-piece. It is full of sobbing cadenzas and sighing intervals that express more than words or deeds.

Grief at last gives place to desperation: he is on the point of killing himself when *Amor* reappears. The gods are again moved to pity by his enduring love, and *Amor* with a touch of her wand revives *Eurydice.*

The opera closes with a trio between *Amor* and the reunited pair, an ode to the power of love. It is a sort of musical apotheosis. The orchestral accompaniment has a steady, revolving movement that might suggest the wheel of time tuned and turned in harmony with the voice of love.

CHAPTER XV

EMMA EAMES, A QUEEN OF SONG

A CALL at the Hotel Marie Antoinette is a veritable eighteenth-century dream. A powdered footman, in satin knee-breeches and the full court costume of that period, flings open the great glass doors as you enter, and another one escorts you around some columns, and through some curtains, and down some steps to the main reception-room, where you wait while your name is announced.

The Hotel Marie Antoinette is very exclusive, so you happen to be alone in this great apartment, with its stained-glass dome and carved oak walls; alone, excepting for the pretty, soft-voiced maid who is arrayed as were the ladies-in-waiting of the Trianon. She assists you in removing your wraps, and at the same time talks enthusiastically about the great personage you have come to see.

"We all here just love her, she is so gracious and appreciative of everything we do, and so kind to us. She gives us tickets to the opera, and she isn't at all proud or haughty. She often comes in here of an afternoon to have tea. There is her corner where she always sits" —and the maid points reverentially to a dainty recess curtained with tapestries and dreamily illumined by a huge pendant red globe. As your glance roams on, you find many objects that hold your attention. There are historic cabinets of rare value and workmanship, little tea-tables beside the various couches, bearing trays of antique china and tiny spoons of old silver, all sought and selected from the castles and treasure-rooms of

Europe. There is one dainty solid gold clock that belonged to Marie Antoinette and was used in her boudoir. Another one which she also owned is jeweled with turquoise and garnets. Many valuable miniatures of the unfortunate queen and her family are on the desks and writing-tables. In one enticing alcove are two rows of sumptuous volumes bound in red and gold whose mere titles set one to dreaming of court intrigues and palace revels. "The Secret Memoirs of the Court" comprise one set of ten books; ten more are devoted to Napoleon, and "The life and Times of Louis XV" also occupies much shelf-room; while on the center-table is a collection of engravings portraying the life of Marie Antoinette.

You feel yourself a court lady by this time; and when the powdered dignitary again appears and calls out your name in stately tones, you follow him with a sense of importance quite pleasant and unusual. You are led past more columns and through more curtains, until finally he leaves you in a moderate-sized ante-room. Here you wait for some moments, expectantly watching the doorway by which you entered, when suddenly, on the opposite side of the room, some folding-doors which you had not noticed are flung wide open by unseen hands, and behold the queen—of Grand Opera, Madame Emma Eames!

I was calling on Emma Eames at the time of her greatest fame.

It was indeed a right royal vision I beheld; a beautiful woman garbed in satin and decked in pearls; she was seated on a silken divan. Emma Eames is more than beautiful, for together with regular features and soft curves she has a strong face and a pose of the head that

is all determination and force. She is tall and full-figured, her hair is dark, and her eyes are very blue.

She displayed a charming smile as she motioned her visitor to a seat near by, and then followed a rapid sequence of questions and answers. Madame Eames showed a kindly response to her visitor's spirit of earnestness, and tried to tell as much as possible in every reply she made.

First in order of interest is the fact that she was born, August 13, 1867, in Shanghai, China. There's a beginning for you!—enough to crush an ordinary mortal. But Emma Eames took it otherwise; and all who know of her now must admit that to be born under the Star of the East on the thirteenth day of the month is after all not bad. As soon as she was old enough to walk she left the land of her birth and came with her mother and father (who was a lawyer of the international courts) to their native home, the city of Bath, in Maine.

Here she studied music with her mother, going later on to Boston and finally to Paris, where she worked with indomitable will, studying operas, dramatic action, voice culture, and especially French. This last is very important for those aiming to sing publicly in Paris, for the people there will not tolerate any weakness of pronunciation.

When asked if she ever had time for any social pleasures, Madame Eames answered very earnestly: "I have never done anything in my life but work. I cared for other pleasures just as any girl does, but have always foregone them."

As a result of this ceaseless work she was fitted for the operatic stage in two years' time.

"It was Gounod himself who selected me to sing in

his opera 'Romeo and Juliet.' He taught me that music, and also 'Faust.' He was a most lovable old man, so modest and, above all, sincere and truth-loving in his music. He often said to me, 'Never degrade music—the one divine language on earth—to express a lie.' When teaching a phrase, instead of dictating, as you would expect so great a man to do, he always asked, 'How do you *feel* when you hear that? Sing it as *you feel it,* not what I feel or tell you.' And he could sing so exquisitely! Yes, old as he was, and he had just the smallest possible voice, yet it was delightful to hear."

Madame Eames's tones were tender and thoughtful as she recalled these reminiscences of her beloved master.

The number thirteen looms up again in Madame Eames's history as the date of her great début. It was the evening of March 13, 1889, in the world's most beautiful opera-house, that the swaying pendants of its great chandelier vibrated to the sound of a new voice and the marble walls of its ornate halls reverberated the sound of a new name—"Emma Eames, la jeune Américaine."

No wonder she made a sensation; she was the ideal *Juliet,* youthful, beautiful, and with a voice of golden timbre.

A more lovely scene and more tender tragedy has never been depicted in music than is the last act of this opera. The beholder sees in the somber setting of an iron-barred tomb the white-clad form of Juliet lying upon a bier that is raised like an altar above several steps. There are loose flowers still unwithered scattered near the silent sleeper, and one pale torch burns restlessly in a brazier at her head. No other movement; no change on the stage for many minutes.

But the listeners, in this pause, are brought heart to heart with the gentle composer, who sleeps himself now in the Pantheon of Paris. Gounod has enwrapped this scene in ethereal harmonies that make one think of Death not as the King of Terrors, but as the Queen of Repose. The principal melody is a lulling, loving strain that floats and fades away like a final "hush" to rest.

The classic purity of Madame Eames's beauty impressed itself in these moments perhaps more than any other, and the nobility of her voice was revealed in the succeeding dramatic climax of the opera, to the fullest.

In speaking of her début, the singer said that she was very nervous, "for, before the public has approved, you don't feel sure that you know anything. After this, there is some foundation for your nerves to rest on, altho you realize how much there is still to learn. But I am always nervous even yet, never knowing what trick my nerves may play on me. No, my memory gives me no anxiety, for I fortunately have a very reliable one. If, by any chance, I forget a word on the stage, I know my health is run down; then I at once take a rest for several days."

But Emma Eames has not taken many such rests. Young as she was when I called on her, she had already sung in twenty-one different operas with unvarying success, in England, France, and Italy as well as her own country. When studying a new rôle she made it a point to be accurate in every detail.

"I have always given great thought to my costumes, but once I have studied thoroughly into the period represented and feel convinced that my designs are correct, I never change them. When one set is shabby I merely have it duplicated."

Little wonder a prima donna has no time for social gaiety when you consider all the accessories to her art. Aside from the study and actual performing, she must take proper exercise for her health, must attend rehearsals, give time to the costumer—and, also, to the many interviewers. Madame Eames smiled at this suggestion, and said:

"I don't mind any of these, but I do dread having my photograph taken. We have to put on the entire costumes of different operas: wigs, stockings, gloves, slippers—everything as tho ready to go on with our lines, and all just to stand around in a studio and pose. It is terrible; it takes a whole day sometimes."

A question about her method of study brought forth the fact that at one time she was quite misdirected in the use of her voice.

"I was turned entirely in the wrong direction, and it is no exaggeration to say that I have fought the battle out step by step and note by note all alone—or, rather, in the very presence of the public. When I first appeared my voice-control was uncertain; I did not dare take any liberties with my tones. I was in constant anxiety, and miserable because I had not the power of voice-emission that I wanted. I assure you in those days I was sometimes so discouraged that I thought seriously of giving up my profession."

An astounding assertion this will seem to the thousands of those listeners who have been enthralled by her voice. But Madame Eames was very serious, and she added philosophically: "After all, I don't think one can attain anything worth having unless one has suffered deeply."

In the summer Madame Eames used to take a six-

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EMMA EAMES

weeks' vacation in her Italian castle near Florence. I was shown a description of this edifice, which reads like a page of old history. The sullen gray stone walls are six feet thick, and the heavy doors with their great iron hinges are all carved by hand, as indeed is all the workmanship on the place. The main hall of the castle is sixty feet long and twenty-five feet wide. There are four massive fireplaces in this one apartment, and a wooden balcony reached by a broad stairway runs all around the second story of the hall. The ceiling is of carved oak, and a reproduction of a famous one in Florence. Everything is in accord with the traditions of the Middle Ages. Madame Eames takes great delight in this castle, and she has with her numerous photographs of it.

Many guests have visited in those halls; but even if the gifted owner lived there alone it would always seem peopled by a large assemblage, for Madame Eames studied much during these vacations, and the mystic characters of her repertoire may be said to hover ever near. The castle is furnished with rich hangings and historic trophies; but most priceless of all should be counted the music furnished by her own rare voice.

It were indeed a pity to fling the stray tones of a great voice upon crude walls and cramped quarters; let them rather resound and reverberate, and perchance be preserved, by the listening atoms of carved wood and chiseled stone.

If the earth is God's garden and we are the plants that grow, then Madame Eames must be likened to a rare orchid, radiant in the sunshine of great success, and showered with all possible blessings.

CHAPTER XVI

"FAUST"

FAUST is the opera in which Madame Eames appeared most often in this country. No less than sixteen composers have used Goethe's poem as a libretto. Many of these works are excellent, and frequently we hear excerpts from them in our concerts. But Gounod has clad the words in musical raiment of such surpassing loveliness that he has almost robbed Goethe of his masterpiece. At this day, on hearing the name Faust we think of the opera simultaneously with, if not before, the poem. He has made of it a "Grand Opera" in every sense; and yet so abounding in melody that even an untrained ear is captured.

"Faust" opens with an orchestral prelude that is somber and subdued—suggestive of the doubt and darkness that characterize the scene upon which the curtain rises.

Faust, the philosopher, the student, is seated in his cell, surrounded by books, parchments, chemicals, skulls, and hour-glasses. He has grown old in his delving after the mysteries, and even now he has devoted the whole night to study. The lamp burns low, and all about him is dark and gloomy. He closes his book sadly, and exclaims in tones that seem spontaneous, but are, nevertheless, in accurate rhythm with the orchestra, "In vain!" He does not find the knowledge he seeks; his investigations are without avail. It seems strange to hear these laments sounded by a tenor voice; but this trifling incongruity of high tones and old age does not last long. The character *Faust* is one of the greatest tenor rôles.

His soliloquy is presently broken in upon by a chorus behind the scenes. It is the song of reapers going to their daily work. The morning light streams in at the window which *Faust* throws open as he listens. But sunshine itself is not brighter than that song. It is so joyous and light-hearted that the listener fairly inhales the dew-laden air of the fields. This first melody in the opera is as perfect a morceau for its size as was ever written. The solitaire in his cell is also affected by the radiant song, and he envies the reapers for their contentment and for their youth. Yes, *youth* is what he longs for.

Altho *Faust* has declared his study to be "in vain," he has, nevertheless, acquired the accomplishment of being able to call up *Mephistopheles* (this is the operatic name for the great demon), and in his present despair he resorts to this power. *Mephisto* appears without delay. Flaming colors and a bass voice are the essential attributes of this great character. It seems rather hard on our artists who sing to low *G* that a bass voice is so often chosen to represent iniquity; but such happens to be the case. *Mephisto* is invariably clad in red from head to toe; exaggerated eyebrows and a fantastic cap with unobtrusive horns complete his diabolical appearance.

In a continuous flow of harmony, *Faust* informs his visitor of his wants, and *Mephisto* promptly states his conditions: for the price of his soul after death the philosopher shall now be granted his youth. *Faust* hesitates at this, whereupon the wily demon causes him to behold a vision. A bright light at the back of the stage suddenly reveals the lovely *Marguerite* at her spinning-wheel. While the picture lasts there is heard in the orchestra a suggestion of one of the themes that come afterward in the love-scene of the opera; this is accom-

panied by a soft tremolo on the violins. Forest scenes, moonlight, and dreams are very often represented in music by a violin tremolo. When the vision passes away, *Faust* is decided, and he drinks the potion *Mephistopheles* prescribes. Presto! The gray hair and beard disappear; the long robe falls off, and *Faust* is a young man—tall and handsome, as a tenor should be. He comes forward with an elastic step and sings of youth and its joys, which now are his. The music has undergone a metamorphosis like the singer. It throbs with a life and vigor which were lacking before; this final song of the first act is one of the best tenor solos in the opera.

The second act is chiefly remarkable for its choruses. It is called the Kyrmess, and represents a street thronged with villagers in festive array and mood. They dance and sing in honor of their soldiers, who start this day to war. The opening chorus is divided among the students, girls, soldiers, and citizens, the latter being represented by old men, who come forward and sing their delightful refrain in thin, piping voices. Every phrase of this first chorus is a surprize, and each one seems more fascinating than the preceding. It is all in a rapid, tripping tempo, and fairly bubbles over with good humor.

In this act we are introduced to all the principal characters. *Siebel,* the village youth who loves *Marguerite,* is already on the scene, and very soon her soldier-brother, *Valentine*, appears. This is the barytone rôle, and, while not a long one, is still important, and requires a great artist, for he has a splendid death-scene in the fourth act. His first solo begins with the words, "O sancta medaglia!" ("O blessed medallion!"). He sings to the token which his sister has just given him at parting. He is depressed at the thought of leaving *Marguerite*

alone, for she is an orphan; but *Siebel* consoles him with promises to protect and watch over her.

Mephisto is the next one to come upon the scene, and, in spite of his satanic make-up, the villagers do not recognize his "name and station." He joins in their merrymaking, and soon astounds them with his wizard tricks and actions. He sings a song about "Gold—the lord of the earth." It is one of the three important solos of this rôle, and is a most characteristic piece. One has not the least doubt that he learned it at home! Such eccentric, sardonic intervals and rhythm at once suggest an unholy origin.

The peasants soon become so convinced of this stranger's evil power that they unanimously hold up the hilts of their swords, which are formed like a cross, and before this emblem *Mephisto* trembles. A very strong and inspiring chorus accompanies this move on the part of the peasants.

Faust, the handsome cavalier, now comes forward. After a short dialog between this master and servant—who we know are under compact to change places in the hereafter—the chorus again take possession of the stage. They sing first a charming waltz song, which of itself seems to start them all to dancing. And then comes the celebrated "Faust Waltz," during which the listener should pay most attention to the orchestra. There is some singing and much dancing on the stage, but the instruments have the most important part. Of this well-known composition it is unnecessary to say more than that it is a splendid waltz.

Its brilliant rhythm is temporarily diverted by the entrance of *Marguerite,* who is on her way home from church. She carries a prayer-book in her hand, and is

dressed in white, which betokens innocence. This costume of the heroine has been considered as imperative as the make-up of *Mephisto;* but Madame Eames carefully studied old Nuremburg pictures and resurrected the correct style of that period, which somewhat departs from operatic tradition.

On seeing *Marguerite, Faust* addresses her as "My charming lady," and begs permission to walk home with her. To which *Marguerite* very properly replies that she is neither "charming" nor a "lady," and can go home "alone." The question and response last only a moment, but the two themes are most exquisitely adapted to the words, and should be noted, as they recur later on in the opera. Especially lovely are these first notes of the soprano; and after so much chorus and bass and orchestra, they soar out like strokes from a silver bell.

Marguerite goes on her homeward way, and leaves *Faust* more in love than before. *Mephisto* rejoices, and the waltz is resumed. Thus ends Act II.

And now for the Garden Scene—a veritable bouquet of melodies, flowers that never fade! The first aria is, indeed, called the "Flower Song," but only because *Siebel* sings to the flowers he has brought for *Marguerite. Siebel* is the contralto rôle, and therefore always taken by a woman. It is a very short part, but as two of the sweetest songs in the opera belong to *Siebel,* great artists are glad to take the character. The short prelude by the orchestra before the "Flower Song" is a joy in itself. It seems to smooth the brow and quiet the mind, and coax the hearer into just the right mood "to be lulled by sounds of sweetest melody." *Siebel's* song is indeed "sweetest melody"—so much so that a poor singer can hardly spoil it. That gentle and caressing theme captures the heart every time.

After *Siebel* has gone, there enter *Faust* and *Mephistopheles* (who gains admission everywhere). The latter is in high spirits, and *Faust* is in love. They look upon the garden with different emotions. *Faust* rhapsodizes and is lost in romance; but *Mephisto's* more practical vision perceives the flowers which *Siebel* has left at *Marguerite's* door. He goes off at once to procure a present that shall outshine these. During his absence *Faust* sings the "Salve dimora." These are the first words of the song, which is an apostrophe to *Marguerite's* home. "Hail! dwelling, pure and simple," are the English words, but this composition is always referred to by its Italian name.

It is interesting to note the names by which celebrated arias are known. Some are designated by the subject, as the "Jewel Song," the "Flower Song." Then, again, some are known by the rhythm, as the "Waltz Song" from "Romeo and Juliet," or the "Polacca from 'Mignon.'" Then, there are others whose names only indicate the number of voices, as the "Sextet from 'Lucia,'" the "Quartette from 'Rigoletto'"; while many are spoken of by their Italian names. The "Salve dimora" belongs to this class, and, like the "Jewel Song," is so celebrated that many people who have not heard the music are still familiar with the name. The tenor who does not receive abundant applause after this aria may feel that he has lost his best chance in the opera.

After the solo *Mephisto* reenters with a jewel-casket under his arm. He places this where *Marguerite* will surely find it, and then the two retire. Now is an expectant moment, for the soprano holds the stage alone for some time, and has in this scene her finest solos. She comes in through the garden gate and walks very slowly, for she is thinking about the handsome stranger who

spoke to her in the street. She tries, however, to forget the occurrence, and resolutely sits down to her spinning. As she spins she sings a ballad called "The King of Thule." It is a sad little song, with strange minor intervals that make one feel "teary 'round the heart." *Marguerite* interrupts her ballad to soliloquize again, in pretty, recitative tones, about that "fine stranger," but she soon recalls herself and resumes the song. At last she gives up trying to spin, and starts for the house; whereupon she sees *Siebel's* flowers, which are admired, but dropped in amazement when her eyes rest upon the jewel-box. After some misgivings, she opens it and discovers jewels so beautiful that from sheer joy and delight she starts to trilling like a bird. This trill is the opening of the great aria, which seems thus to poise for a moment and then fly away in the ascending scale which commences the brilliant theme. The "Jewel Song" is as difficult as it is beautiful, and the artist who sings it well deserves unstinted praise.

Before the song is ended, *Martha,* the matron in whose care *Marguerite* has been entrusted, comes into the garden, and soon is followed by *Faust* and *Mephistopheles.* Hers is a necessary but unimportant character, as she has no solo and is merely a foil for *Mephistopheles.* She is represented as a very susceptible widow, and he takes upon himself the uninviting task of making love to her in order that *Faust* and *Marguerite* may have a chance. The two couples walk back and forth in the garden, which is supposed to extend beyond the limits of the stage. The courting as done by *Mephistopheles* is highly absurd, and is, in fact, the only touch of humor in the opera.

But very different are the scenes between *Faust* and

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MELBA AS "MARGUERITE" IN "FAUST"

Marguerite. Every phrase is full of charming sincerity. But it is after the quartet, after the second exit and reappearance, that we hear their great love duet. The evening shadows have lengthened, and "Tardi si fa" ("It groweth late") are the first words of this superb composition, which is indeed like pure gold. It stands alone in musical literature as the ideal love music. The only work that is ever compared with it is Wagner's duet in the "Walküre." Some writer has ventured the statement that in this "Faust" duo Gounod has "actually discovered the intervals of the scale which express the love passion." The idea is not a wild one nor a new one, for it is known that the Greeks held a similar belief, and even prohibited certain harmonies and intervals as being too sensuous. Be that as it may, there is a subtle charm about Gounod's music that eludes description. When we hear that final ecstatic leap from *C* sharp to high *A,* a mystic hush and spell steals over us.

There is little more after the duo. *Marguerite* hastens into the house, and *Faust* is aroused by the unwelcome voice of *Mephistopheles.* The latter's jesting tone is most irritating to the lover. But this dialog is soon interrupted by one of the loveliest scenes in the opera. *Marguerite* throws open the blinds of her window and looks into the garden, which she believes is now vacant. The moonlight falls upon her, and she sings of her love—proclaims it to the night.

Faust, hearing her, rushes to the open window and clasps her in his arms, as the curtain descends on this dream-picture of love and moonlight and music.

Act IV comprises three scenes. The first one is short, and depicts *Marguerite's* grief and remorse. *Faust* has forsaken her, and the faithful *Siebel* tries to comfort

and console. This second solo of *Siebel's* is a melody of noble simplicity. The beautiful cadence given to the twice-repeated name, "Marguerita," reveals a heart full of unselfish love.

The next scene represents a street in front of *Marguerite's* house. There is general excitement and anticipation among the villagers, for to-day the soldiers return from war. They presently enter, amid much rejoicing, and sing their great chorus, called the "Faust March." This march is so popular and well known that people who believe they have never heard a note of the opera will be surprized to find that they recognize this march. It is played by every military band in the country. After the chorus the soldiers disperse to their homes and friends. Valentine is greeted by *Siebel,* and the brother inquires eagerly about his sister; they hasten into the house.

The stage now is darkened, for the hour is late. Presently *Faust* and *Mephisto* appear. The latter has brought his guitar, and he assumes the privilege of singing a serenade to *Marguerite,* while *Faust* stands to one side in melancholy meditation. *Mephisto's* song is more insulting than complimentary. As a musical expression of irony, sarcasm, and insolence, this composition is certainly a success. The last three notes of the first phrase are a veritable leer. This is the second important bass solo, and, when well given, is highly effective, as it admits of great variety of expression. But instead of bringing forth the object of the serenade, *Marguerite's* brother appears at the door, and with drawn sword. He seeks out *Faust* and challenges him to a duel. The challenge is accepted, and soon they are fighting; but the result is inevitable, for *Mephisto* uses his demoniac

power to protect *Faust,* and so *Valentine* is wounded. The noise of the scuffle has aroused the villagers, who hurry in with lanterns and find *Valentine* dying. *Marguerite* rushes forward and falls on her knees beside him, but *Valentine* motions her away. He rises up in his death agony and curses her in tones that are like balls of fire—declares he is dying because of her sin. The villagers look on with awe, while poor *Marguerite* is stunned by these terrible words from her dying brother. It is the most tragic moment of the opera. When *Valentine* expires, every one kneels as they sing a solemn prayer, and the curtain falls.

We have next the Church Scene, whose sublime music displays Gounod's special forte. He is perhaps greater as a composer of ecclesiastical music than anything else. His genius finds most congenial soil in religious themes, and therefore is this church scene with its mighty choruses and organ interludes truly grand. We hear the organ tones even before the curtain rises, and when it does *Marguerite* is discovered kneeling on a prayer-chair, apart from the other worshipers. She tries to pray and find comfort in her despair, but an awful voice mocks her endeavors, and that voice is *Mephistopheles,* who comes to her now in his true character. He is near her, but she can not see him, while he terrifies and tortures her with fearful prophecies. Vainly and desperately she strives to follow the familiar service, but she can hear only the demon's voice. It draws ever nearer, and its words increase her terror. At last with a cry of anguish *Marguerite* falls down unconscious. *Mephistopheles* stands over her, and his face beams with satanic glee.

True to Goethe's story, *Marguerite* becomes insane

from grief and kills her child. The last act finds her in prison. Once again she is clad in white. Her hair hangs loose upon her shoulders, and chains bind her wrists. She is sleeping on a straw pallet as the curtain rises, and *Faust* enters with his companion. They have come to release the prisoner. But when she is aroused and urged to flee she pays little heed to their request, for she does not recognize them. But the sound of *Faust's* voice recalls to her that first meeting so long ago, when he said, "My fair lady, may I walk with you?" She sings again that charming phrase as we heard it in the second act; but it is now sounded with a pathos and simplicity that bring tears to our eyes.

She presently perceives *Mephistopheles,* and the sight fills her with terror. She falls on her knees and invokes the angels of heaven to pardon and receive her soul. The fervor of this prayer knows no bounds. A veritable religious ecstasy throbs through the music. The theme is broad and free, and seems to burst asunder every bond. It suggests a glory and splendor that are celestial. Ever higher and grander it grows. *Marguerite* is now standing with upraised arms; and altho *Faust* and *Mephisto* join in the singing, our attention is entirely riveted by that white-robed supplicant. The peerless theme is repeated three times, and always higher than before. Those soprano tones finally reach an atmosphere so clear and rare that they seem to carry the soul of *Marguerite* with them. The last high *B* soars up to heaven like a disembodied spirit.

It matters not what occurs after this. We have a dim consciousness of *Marguerite* falling down, of some words of lament from *Faust;* but for us the opera was ended with that last supernal note.

CHAPTER XVII

"WERTHER"

MADAME EAMES was the first prima donna whom America heard in "Werther"—a work which in Paris ranks as Massenet's best. But she has not sung it often, because, as she says, "It all lies in such a low key; and to sing always in one place is hard on the voice." Then she adds, "But the love-music of Werther is beautiful."

Goethe's love-stories find favor with French composers. Massenet has accomplished with "Werther" what his predecessors have done with "Mignon" and "Faust." His work is recent and, in a way, unique. The story is not dramatic, and there are no regulation operatic characters—no gods, no kings, no peasants, gypsies, fairies, demons, villains, slaves, soldiers, and not even a chorus. The scenery is also unconventional; not a palace, nor a mountain, nor a dungeon in the whole play.

The *dramatis personæ* of "Werther" are taken from "ye lower middle classes," and they are graced with such names as *Schmidt, Johann, Sophie,* and *Charlotte.* We find it agreeable and gratifying to see our own common selves and every-day emotions elevated to the regions of classic music.

It is easy to understand why Massenet was attracted by the story, in spite of its dramatic weakness and lack of stage effects. It offers unbounded opportunities for love-music. Most opera composers must content themselves with one rousing duet and perhaps a solo or two; but in this story the hero sings of love from first to last.

The prelude to this homely opera is like the blessing before a meal. It is peaceful and soothing, and might be called a pastorale.

As the curtain rises we are greeted with the chatter and laughter of childish voices: two innovations at one stroke, for real children and real laughter have never before held a place in Grand Opera. This first scene of "Werther" forms a pleasing summer picture. We see the garden and terrace of a simple country house, whose owner, the town *bailiff,* is seated upon the veranda surrounded by his six children, to whom he is teaching a Christmas carol. He seems to be teaching them, but in point of fact he is teaching the audience this charming melody, which must be kept in mind, for it recurs at various intervals during the opera. So the children sing at first very loud and badly. The good-natured *bailiff* shakes his head and stops his ears. After a second attempt the song goes smoothly, and during this performance *Schmidt* and *Johann* enter the garden. These are some tavern friends of the *bailiff,* who lend variety to the music by giving occasion for the inevitable drinking-song. They compliment the children and inquire after *Charlotte.* "She is dressing for a ball," answers *Sophie,* the bailiff's second daughter.

We might tire of this plain conversation and the buffoon manners of *Schmidt* and *Johann,* but the accompanying music is of absorbing interest. Massenet makes much use of counterpoint, which has been broadly defined as the art of combining melodies. A crude but familiar example is that wonder-inspiring piano performance of "Yankee Doodle" in one hand with "Fisher's Hornpipe" in the other. It is interesting to follow the various themes in Massenet's orchestra. Sometimes a bit of the

Christmas carol combines with the gruff, reeling song of Bacchus, which, in turn, is blended with a broad and noble theme that always appears in connection with the name of *Charlotte.* Another theme, that might be characterized as severely intellectual, asserts itself whenever the conversation turns upon *Albert,* her absent fiancé.

Schmidt and *Johann* go off arm in arm, lustily singing, "Vivat Bacchus."

Sophie enters the house, while the bailiff retires with the children to an alcove on the veranda, where we see him patiently rehearsing that Christmas carol, word for word.

The music now undergoes a transition, like a dreamer turning in his sleep. There are harp-chords, arpeggios, and trills written soft and "dim."

A richly clad traveler enters the garden, looking about him with evident emotion. It is *Werther,* returned after years of absence, to his native village.

"I know not if I dream or wake," are his first words, while the instruments recall that pastoral motif of the prelude. Birds and trees and the limpid brook are all apostrophized in word and tone, until, with a sunburst of rising chords, there is introduced a new and radiant theme, eulogizing—

> "All nature, full of grace,
> Queen over time and space";

while under the spell of his emotions—for *Werther* is a poet and a dreamer—there comes to him, like the song of angels, that blessed Christmas carol which the children are singing softly and with perfect rhythm.

The already familiar *Charlotte*-theme announces the

heroine's entrance. The girlish costume of this bourgeoise character are unusually becoming to Madame Eames; they present her in quite a new light, and her first entrance gives a pleasing surprize to the audience.

She is embraced by the children, who love *Charlotte* dearly, for she is to them both a sister and a mother. Regardless of her best gown, she now goes to a buffet on the veranda and distributes slices of bread and butter. This scene has prompted the epithet, "bread-and-butter opera."

In the meantime *Werther* is welcomed by the *bailiff* and introduced to *Charlotte*. Sounds of gay music accompany the arrival of guests who will take *Charlotte* to the ball. This festive music is unique. The bass presents a defiant repetition of one chord that is stubbornly out of harmony with the bright melody above, like old age shaking his head at youthful gaiety.

It is decided that *Werther* shall go along to the ball. The dance-theme is resumed, and the merry party go out. *Sophie* takes the children into the house, and the *bailiff* goes off to the tavern, humming on the way that comical drinking-song.

The stage grows darker, the music softer, and we hear a fragment of the *Albert*-theme. It is like seeing the shadow before the person, for *Albert* soon enters. He has returned unexpectedly. *Sophie* rushes out to greet him, and she regrets that *Charlotte* is absent.

Before going into the house *Albert* sings to the night winds of his love, and hopes that *Charlotte* on entering the garden will discover the thoughts that he leaves.

The orchestra toys with this melody for a time, but then is diverted by memories of the ball music. Snatches of the bewitching strain flit by in different keys, like

belated guests in vari-colored dominos. They are faint as fantoms—a gentle swaying of the violins, a touch of the harp, and then they vanish. There is a pause. The moon has appeared, and the humble garden seems transformed into a fairy-bower.

Like the spirit of a dream is the melody now arising. Ethereal in its beauty but supreme in power, it rules over the entire opera. This is the love-theme. We are not surprized to see *Werther* and *Charlotte* enter arm in arm. It is a familiar situation: he is "seeing her home" from the ball. And arrived at their destination, they linger at the gate, as couples have done before and since.

Charlotte is of a serious nature, and their talk is never light. She tells of her mother and the terrible experience of losing one so dear. "I believe that she watches over me and knows when I do her bidding." *Charlotte's* tones are full of pathos, and she becomes abstracted in her memories, while *Werther,* enraptured by her goodness and beauty, gives utterance to the feelings that enthrall him. The music grows stronger and higher, until it breaks forth in a resounding reality of the love-theme. Over an accompaniment of throbbing chords this superb melody sweeps by like a meteor passing the earth; and during this luminous transition we hear the voice of *Werther,* "Charlotte, I love thee!" There follows a hush, and then a chilling, awful discord. Some one is calling from the house, "Albert has come home!" *Charlotte* staggers at this news. She explains that *Albert* is her betrothed—it was her mother's wish. "May she forgive me, that for one moment at your side I forgot my vow." *Charlotte* goes up the steps; she turns once, but then hastens inside. *Werther* buries his face in anguish at the thought of her wedding another.

When next the curtain rises, several months have elapsed. The elm-tree foliage is denser and the situations of the drama have changed, but love and music remain the same.

Schmidt and *Johann* are discovered sitting before the tavern "of a Sunday afternoon." Their good-natured song of Bacchus greets us like an old friend. The church and parsonage are in plain view, and a solemn choral from within alternates with the drinking-song without. The village to-day is *en fête* in honor of the pastor's golden wedding.

The serious and thoughtful *Albert*-theme marks the entrance of *Charlotte* and *Albert,* who are married. They loiter on their way to church and sit down on a bench under the trees. Very calm and tender is the music of this little scene between husband and wife. The organ resounds the chords of a beautiful hymn, at which summons *Charlotte* and *Albert* join the other worshippers.

Werther has been observing the pair from a distance. When they are gone he comes forward, exclaiming with grief and bitterness, "Wedded to another!" The tempestuous chords of the orchestra clash into the holy harmonies of the organ. Jagged fragments of *Werther's* first song of admiration depict his shattered joy. As one holds together the pieces of a broken vase, sadly recalling its lost loveliness, so does the orchestra again build up that old theme in all its beauty while *Werther* sings of what might have been. Rebellious at fate he cries out: "It is I—I alone whom she could have loved!" The succeeding aria is reckless as a steed galloping to his death. It plunges from high tones to a sob, and the singer, flinging himself upon a bench, buries his face in his arms.

Albert discovers *Werther* thus despondent, and, sus-

pecting the cause, he questions him; but *Werther* desperately disclaims his love for *Charlotte*. This interview is musically serious and sad. But suddenly the orchestra gives us a new key, a new melody, a sprinkling of lithesome staccatos falling like a shower of apple-blossoms. With a smile on her lips and flowers in her hands, *Sophie* enters, unconscious of the surrounding turbulent emotions. She gaily announces that they intend to dance, and that *Werther* must join her in the minuet. Observing his somber expression, she bids him cheer up, for to-day—

"All the world is gay!
Joy is in the air!"

This song is the most popular one of the opera. It is bright and light, and full of fluttering phrases—a veritable song of spring.

When *Albert* and *Sophie* are gone, *Werther* cries out with explosive candor, "I told a falsehood!" He is wretched beyond compare. He can not cease loving, and he dare not cease lying.

Charlotte comes from the church, and, greeting him kindly, asks if he, too, is going to the parsonage. They speak lightly but feel deeply, as is evidenced by the music. That wondrous love-theme softly surrounds them like the magic fire of the Walküre. The harmonies mount up from the instruments like flames from living embers. A spell is upon them. *Charlotte* stands mute, while *Werther* sings of that evening when he touched her hand and looked into her eyes for the first time. Softly and slowly the beautiful melody disappears, giving place to a different chord and motif: "Albert loves me—and I am his wife!" *Charlotte* has recovered herself. She entreats

Werther to turn his heart elsewhere: "Why do you love me?" This hero seems to understand himself, for he answers: "Ask a madman why he has lost his reason!" Then *Charlotte* urges him to go away for a time, say until Christmas. "Yes, until Christmas—good-by, my friend!" She leaves before he has time to refuse.

Now follows a musical adaptation of Goethe's very poetical and ingenious plea for suicide.

> "Do we offend Heaven in ceasing to suffer? When a son returns from his journey before the expected time, far from feeling resentment, the father hastens to greet him; and can it be that our heavenly Father is less clement?"

During this soliloquy we encounter strange chords in the orchestra. Strains of a gay minuet play upon these tragic tones like rainbow colors on the angles of a glacier.

The dance has begun, and *Sophie,* appearing at the parsonage door, tells *Werther,* that she is waiting. He walks away.

"You are leaving! But you will come back?" cries the disappointed *Sophie.*

"No—never! Good-by!" and *Werther* turns down the road out of sight. Either for the lost dance or the lost partner, *Sophie* bursts into tears. *Albert* and *Charlotte* find her thus, and between sobs she tells them how Monsieur *Werther* has gone away forever. *Charlotte* stands rigid, while *Albert* exclaims to himself: "He loves my wife!" The gay assemblage within the parsonage has no knowledge of this brewing tragedy, so the minuet continues till the curtain descends.

The prelude to Act III is somber and depressing. It

clings to the harmonies of that last scene between *Charlotte* and *Werther*—the exile motif.

The curtain's rising reveals *Charlotte* sitting at her work-table, lost in thought while her needle plies.

The soft light of the lamp illumines a *petit salon;* the hour hand of the clock points to the figure five, and the libretto tells us it is the 24th of December. The subject of her thoughts is *Werther*—always *Werther!* Why can she not banish him from her mind as she did from her presence? The question is not hard to answer, for we learn that he has been writing to her. As tho drawn by a magnet, *Charlotte* goes to the desk and reads again the letters she fain would forget. Moaning minors like a winter wind accompany the perusal of these sad and poetic epistles. *Werther* writes: "If I never return, blame me not, but weep instead, for I shall be dead."

Terrifying tremolos accompany the tragic theme that is now let loose in the orchestra like a strange, wild animal in the arena. It preys upon the emotions, gnawing at the heart of every listener. Massenet delights in startling contrasts.

While *Charlotte* is grieving over these missives, a happy voice greets her, "Good-day, sweet sister!" It is *Sophie,* come with an armful of toys and a heart full of melody. She is accompanied by the gay staccatos of her "Spring Song." *Charlotte* hastily conceals the letters; but tears are not so easily disposed of. Perceiving the reddened eyes, *Sophie* tries to cheer her sister by singing of "Laughter, the light of the heart." The gaiety of this music, with its sparkling scales and tripping tempo, is infectious. But tears again gather in *Charlotte's* eyes when *Sophie* mentions the name of *Werther.* The little sister is very sorry; but *Charlotte* says never

mind, weeping does one good. "The tears we do *not* shed fall back upon the heart, which, altho it is big, is very frail and can break with the weight of a tear."

The music to this sentiment is a tone-poem well worthy of the text. It is written in a low key. Joy mounts upward on the scale, but grief weighs down.

Sophie goes out, and all the bright music with her. Falling upon her knees, *Charlotte* prays for strength. With superb crescendos and plaintive diminuendos this heart-wrung supplication mounts heavenward.

The music now swells out with sudden impetus and the parlor door is brusquely opened. *Charlotte* turns around and exclaims with startled tones, "Werther!"

He is leaning against the door as tho wearied in mind and body. "I tried not to come—*mais me voici!*"

With forced calm *Charlotte* bids him welcome. He looks with fond memory upon the old piano and familiar books. They talk of casual things, and incidentally *Charlotte* calls his attention to the poems he was translating when he left.

The music of this scene has been unnaturally tranquil; the gentle *Charlotte*-theme and another phrase, graceful and simple as a nursery rime, are used with touching effect. But with the mention of these poems sudden emotion breaks through the constraint. *Werther* turns to the unfinished verse and reads aloud.

The ensuing scene is dramatically not a new one. In "Francesca da Rimini" the heroine is wooed and won by the reading of a poem; but added to the charm of verse we here have the enthralling power of music. In both instances the reading ends with—a kiss.

The succeeding aria is a song of soaring ecstasy about *"ce premier baiser."* *Werther* proclaims that "only love

is real!" But *Charlotte* suddenly recoils at her weakness, and rushing to a side door, exclaims: "We must never meet again! Good-by—for the last time!" and disappears.

The music has assumed a dolorous strain that vividly portrays the pathos of her last words. *Werther* calls for her to come back. He knocks at the door, but is only answered by the tragic chords of the orchestra. They are furious and fearful, but, strange to say, they adequately express an awful silence. "So be it!" at last exclaims the sorrowful *Werther*. Crashing chords whirl riot in the orchestra as the hero hastens away.

The stage is vacated, but the music tells us whom next to expect. The *Albert*-theme, easily recognizable, tho a trifle harsher than before, comes forward to preside over the finale of this act.

Albert steps into the room, surprized and preoccupied. He has met the distracted *Werther* at the front door, and here finds *Charlotte* locked in her room. In answer to his authoritative call she comes forward looking pale and frightened. He questions her, but she answers evasively. At this moment a message is handed to Albert by a servant. It is from *Werther*: "I go on a long journey. Kindly lend me your pistols. Farewell." *Charlotte* knows the import of these words, but dare not speak. Perhaps *Albert* also knows. He coldly bids her hand the weapons to the servant. Mutely and slowly she goes to the case and delivers the contents as she was bid. That theme in the orchestra continues quietly to move back and forth like a person keeping the death-watch. When the servant has gone, *Albert* strides angrily out of the room. *Charlotte* stands for a moment immobile. The music also seems to stand still; then a sudden impetuous outburst of

the instruments coincides with her decision. From highest *B* to lowest *F* octaves and chords are hurled together, as *Charlotte,* seizing a mantle, rushes to the door. "Pray Heaven I may not be too late!"

We follow *Charlotte* in her flight. The scene changes to a view of the village. It is Christmas eve, nearing midnight. The snow is falling in wild gusts, but through a rift in the clouds the moon looks down upon the peaceful town. Roofs and trees are covered with snow, while from some of the windows household lights are gleaming. The church, too, is lighted, but the moonlight and the snow are most prominent. Even these, however, are not so important as the music. More chilling than hail or snow are those sudden blasts of chords and octaves falling one on top of the other, down, down until they join and melt into the steady tremolo of the bass. Finally, like Death seated on a tombstone, the terrifying tragic theme again looms up.

During this introduction the winter scene on the stage remains the same. The snow continues to fall, and we hear it in the orchestra—a steady movement of double thirds over which play varying melodies like Christmas lights. The musicians turn their leaves once, twice, three times, but still that slowly palpitating accompaniment goes on. There is something appalling in this persistency. What was at first delightful becomes oppressive, for we are somehow reminded that falling snow can bury the living and hide the dead.

A distant bell sounds the hour of twelve. Fierce winds arise, and we see the muffled figure of a woman struggling her way against the gale. The tempest is again heard in the orchestra. Breathlessly we watch the heroine's slow progress, and wonder if she will be too late.

The scene changes to a little room strewn with books and papers. A lamp on the wooden table casts sickly rays upon the surroundings, but we can plainly see a figure reclining on a chair near the window. It is *Werther,* pale and unconscious. *Charlotte* rushes in, and at sight of the dying man is beside herself with grief. She calls him by name, and the sound of her voice revives him. He asks her faintly to stay near him, to pardon him and love him. While he speaks there arises from the orchestra, like the dim visions of a dying man, that first love-theme so full of summer gladness. *Charlotte* sings to him the words he has longed to hear. This last love-song ends in a whisper. The instruments, too, seem hushed with that mysterious silence of Christmas night. We can see through the window the bright moonlight, for the storm has abated.

Suddenly the dying man looks up as sweet music greets his ear—

> "Noël! Noël! Noël!
> Proclaim the wondrous birth!
> Christ the Lord has come to earth!"

It is the happy children's voices singing their Christmas song in the church. A merry carillon of the instruments accompanies the familiar tones of *Sophie's* high, bright voice in the distance—

> "All the world is gay!
> Joy is in the air!"

This startling contrast of life and death has never been more beautifully portrayed.

Werther sadly smiles, murmuring that it is his song of deliverance. He dies in *Charlotte's* arms. She cries out, despairing, inconsolable, "It is finished!" Death is in the orchestra, in the darkness, in the ensuing silence. But suddenly, like "the morning in the bright light," those far-away voices again sing—

"Noël! Noël! Noël!"

CHAPTER XVIII

CALVÉ AND "CARMEN"

"HEAR Calvé in 'Carmen'—and die," is the motto which heralded this singer's first visit to America. Our curiosity was greatly aroused, for we thought we knew all about "Carmen." We clung to the traditions of our own Minnie Hauk who had created the rôle, and could imagine nothing better than a trim, dainty *Carmen* with high-heeled slippers, short skirts, and a Spanish mantilla.

Great was our amazement on that memorable night when we beheld for the first time a real cigaret girl of modern Spain. Here was a daring innovation that at once aroused attention and new interest in the opera. This *Carmen* wore high-heeled slippers, 'tis true, but somewhat worn down and scuffed, as they must be if she was in the habit of running over the cobble-stones of Seville as she ran to the footlights on her first entrance. And her skirts, far from being well-setting and so short as to reveal shapely ankles and a suspicion of lace petticoats, were of that sloppy, half-short length, which even the street-girls of London wear to-day. But most astounding of all departures was the absence of any sign of a mantilla! How could one be Spanish without a mantilla—any more than one could be Russian without fur! But this *Carmen* had an eye to color—she could hardly be a coquette otherwise—and in her hair at the nape of her neck was deftly tucked a large crimson flower. Her hair, however, was carelessly pinned, and even tumbled down later on—a stroke of realism which was added to by the way she coiled it up and jabbed it

into place again. A strange performance to behold in a Grand-Opera setting; and we might have resented such defiance of the code had we not been forced to admit that it was all absolutely correct, and this *Carmen* was more truly Spanish than any impersonation we had seen. Even her voice seemed tropical; such richness of tone, warmth, and color had never before been combined in the singing of Bizet's opera. Had Bizet only lived to this day he might have died happily, for *Carmen,* the child of his brain, found no favor with the public when first introduced.

After the surprize of Madame Calvé's costume and then of her voice, New Yorkers awoke to the fact that *Carmen* had never before been acted. This performance was a revelation, a character study of a creature who recklessly holds that it is *right* to get all the pleasure you can, and *wrong* not to have what you want.

It was the evening after one of these great "Carmen" performances when a knock at the prima donna's door elicited the Parisian response—"*Entrez.*" Mme. Calvé's salon was brilliantly lighted and richly furnished, but it seemed only a somber setting to the singer's radiant self. Not that she was gaudily gowned; on the contrary, her dress was simple, but her personality, her smile, her animation, are a constant delight and surprize.

Mme. Calvé is thoroughly French, and thoroughly handsome, and appears even younger off the stage than on. She is tall and of splendid figure; her complexion is fresh and clear, with an interesting tinge of olive, and her eyes are as black as her hair, which was arranged very pompadour.

Mme. Calvé seated herself with a half-serious, half-amused expression, as tho to recite a lesson, and an-

EMMA CALVÉ

nounced that she was ready and willing to answer *"toutes les questions que vous voulez."* This seemed a golden opportunity to learn all there is to know about singing. It stands to reason that the most direct and easy method of acquiring this art is simply to ask one of the greatest singers of the day how she does it. Some one found out how to play the piano by asking Rubinstein, who said—"All you have to do is to select the right keys and strike them at the right time."

So, with this idea in view, Mme. Calvé was asked first what she thinks of when she steps before the public—her voice, her acting, or the music?

"I think of *Carmen,"* she answered, "if that is the opera. I try to *be Carmen*—that is all."

When asked if she practises her voice much during the day, Mme. Calvé shook her head.

"No—not now. You see, I must have mercy on my poor voice and save it for the evenings when I sing. Formerly, of course, I practised every day, but never more than an hour with full voice. Yes, an hour at one time, once a day, that is all. But I studied much besides. At first I wanted to be an actress, and for this purpose gave much time to dramatic art. My mother was a fine musician; she is the one who urged me to sing."

"What did you practise when you first began with the voice?—single tones?"

Mme. Calvé looked thoughtful—she could hardly recall, until a friend who was present suggested—"it was rather intervals and arpeggios, *n'est-ce pas?*" then the great *Carmen* quickly nodded.

"Yes—you are right; intervals at first, and not until later on, sustained tones. I do not consider single sustained tones good for the beginner."

In reply to a question about breathing, she answered:

"Oh, yes; all singers must practise special exercises for the breath. What else did I do? Well, I hardly remember. I never had any trouble with my throat or my tongue,—no, I never thought much of these."

She was then asked, by way of suggestion:

"Did you ever *hum* in your practise?"

Now her face lighted up.

"Yes," she replied, all animation, "and, do you know, that is splendid! I do it a great deal even yet, especially for the high tones like this,"—and there and then, without moving a muscle, like a conjurer materializing a flock of birds, she showered upon us a bevy of hummed tones. They were soft, of course, but clear and perfect as tho made with full voice, and you wanted to wrap each one in cotton and take it home. But—they were gone!—and the singer went on speaking.

"With Mme. Marchese I used to hum a great deal. Yes, it is an excellent practise, for it brings the tone forward right here," and she touched the bridge of her nose.

Mme. Calvé is so genial and vivacious in conversation that you are led to forget her position and wonderful attainments. But now and then it flashes over you that this is the woman whose manifold art has astonished two continents; a singer who makes any rôle she undertakes so distinctly her own that other singers hardly dispute her right to monopolize it. Not only is her *Carmen* a creation; *Ophelia,* too, she has imbued with new interest, introducing many startling voice and breath effects. Throughout all the mad scene she calls into use an "eerie-tone" that is fearful in its pathos and terror.

"I love that rôle!" she exclaimed, as the subject came up. "The mad scene! Ah, it is superb!"

Even in "Faust," the very Ancient of Days among operas, Mme. Calvé has surprized us with original touches, altho it is a work that every musician of any description has performed in some way or other. The pianist flourishes with the waltz, or a general fantasia of the opera on every and all occasions. The organist delights in the church-scene music, while the violinist rhapsodizes with the love duo or a potpourri of all the arias. Concert sopranos never cease to exploit the "Jewel Song," while the contralto's audience never tires of the famous "Flower Song." "O Sancta Medaglia" is dear to the heart of the barytone, and the tenor has a choice of beautiful solos from the first act to the last. Bass singers can find nothing better as a medium for gaining public favor than Mephisto's song to the "God of Gold." Even flutists and clarinetists resort to "Faust," the Imperishable, when they want something sure to please. And last, but not least, the cornet—ask any soloist on this instrument what piece he has played most often, and, I warrant you, he will answer, "My Faust fantasie!" The opera singer who does not have in her scrap-book some account of her performance as Marguerite can hardly count herself a prima donna. No other opera is so essentially a piece of common property as is this Gounod's "Faust."

So much the more is Mme. Calvé's achievement to be wondered at. A very stroke of genius is the dropping of *Marguerite's* prayer-book in the excitement of her first meeting with *Faust,* so symbolical is it of his effect on her life. This is more than realism—it is poetry. Again, in the Spinning Song, she creates an exquisite effect by disentangling a knot in the thread on her wheel and at the same time slowing up with her song and

diminishing it until the wheel turns again and she resumes the tempo.

When asked how she ever thinks of these innovations, especially the one of inserting ecstatic little laughs in the Jewel Song, she smiled prettily and shrugged her shoulders.

"It just comes to me in the acting—I don't know how. But I never change the music."

She wished it impressed that, whatever her innovations, she maintains a reverence for all of the composer's work.

There is something about Mme. Calvé that makes you feel in her presence the subtle influence of a large heart and a grand soul. In her own land she is famed not only for her singing, but also for her great generosity.

CHAPTER XIX

"CARMEN"

EVERYONE likes "Carmen." Its popularity has been ascribed to the fact that "the action explains itself to the eye." One might also add that the music explains itself to the ear, for the themes are all unfurled and displayed like so many banners. In choosing Mérimée's novel for a libretto, Bizet recognized the growing demand for dramatic plots with rapid action—a demand which has since evolved such one-hour tragedies as "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci." Aside from the stirring romance and fascinating music, "Carmen" also presents very delightful stage-pictures. The suburbs of Seville form an interesting setting, and the characters all require brilliant costumes. A bull-fighter, two smugglers, three gypsies, cigaret-girls, and soldiers—not a plain individual among them!

Before meeting these unusual personages we are presented with a letter of introduction from Bizet, which, because it is written in musical notation, the orchestra kindly interprets to us. We herein learn that these people take their pleasures, loves, and hates at a breakneck pace. There is a feverish excitement about the whole prelude; but at the end we hear a tragic minor motif of passion and pain that sends a chill to the heart. It is the Carmen-theme—*Carmen* herself.

A gay plaza in Seville is the first scene of action. At one side is the guard-house, near which are a number of soldiers who mingle and converse with the other strollers and promenaders. A gossiping, good-natured chorus

about the square and the people is the opening number. This pleasing melody, in spite of its simplicity, has strange intervals and a restless tempo that are thoroughly Spanish. A young peasant girl soon enters, rather timidly. It is *Micaela*, the high soprano rôle, which because of its two fine arias is often taken by a great artist, altho the part is a subordinate one. It has frequently been sung by Madame Eames. *Micaela* inquires for a brigadier called *Don José*. An officer politely informs her that *Don José* belongs to the next guard, which will soon arrive. With a musical phrase of dainty and condescending gallantry he invites her to tarry with them. *Micaela* declines the invitation, and uses the same musical setting for her own words. With the announcement that she will return after a while she escapes from their entreaties. The chorus is resumed, and the walking and talking go on as before. Soon the fifes and drums of the relief guard are heard in the distance. The soldiers in front shoulder arms and stand in file as the approaching company appears, followed by a lot of street gamins who keep step and sing to the music. This is so lively and inspiriting that we would march and sing too if we dared. There is a satisfying quantity of this "ta-ta-ta-ra" music. After marching to the foreground the new guards change place with the old, who are then led away with the same contingent of music and street boys. The soldiers and people at last disperse, leaving *Don José* and a superior officer, *Zuniga,* conversing together. The latter points to a large building, which he says is the cigaret factory, where are employed many pretty girls. *Don José* professes to care little for these, and we soon learn that he loves *Micaela.*

The factory bell now rings, and a crowd of young

men and boys at once fill the square in eager anticipation of seeing the cigar girls. *José* sits down near the guard-house and busies himself with a little chain he is mending. The tenors sing a short pianissimo chorus about these dark-eyed girls, whom they always court and follow. It closes with a drooping, yearning *ritardando* that quite prepares us for the next languishing measures. The factory girls enter, with cigarets in their mouths and a nonchalant manner that is delightful. Between puffs of smoke they sing a slumbrous refrain that suggests the effect of nicotine. The lingering legato melody seems to rise softly and rest in the air until it passes away in tones so faint that Bizet has marked them four times pianissimo.

The young men now accost the girls, and soon inquire for *Carmen.* "Where is Carmen?" That tragic cry which ended the prelude is heard again in the orchestra, but so disguised by rapid tempo as to be scarcely recognizable, and with this theme *Carmen* rushes upon the scene.

Black-eyed, pearly-teethed *Carmen,* with cheeks like the red acacia flowers at her throat, and her whole appearance like a splash of sunshine!

The youths clamor about her and inquire collectively when she will love them. *Carmen* bestows regardlessly some of her dangerous laughing glances, and then sings her great song, the "Habanera," so called because of its rhythm, which is like the Spanish dance of that name. But no mazy, undulating dance could be so fascinating as this song about "Love, the child of Bohemia." The compass of its ravishing melody is within a single octave. The notes cling lovingly together, for the intervals are mostly half-tones; and, indeed, as *Carmen* sings them

each one seems like a kiss or a caress. The theme is first given in the minor, and then softly taken up by the chorus in the major—an effect as surprizing and delightful as a sudden breeze on a sultry night. The accompaniment is like the soft picking of mandolins, and all things combine to represent the warm luxuriance of Spain.

During the song *Carmen* has perceived *Don José,* who continues his work and gives her no attention whatever, which is a new experience for this spoiled and petted cigaret-girl. She purposely becomes more personal in her song, and ends with the audacious words, "if you love me not and I love you—beware!" With a sudden dash of impertinent coquetry she flings a flower at *Don José,* and then rushes off the stage amid peals of laughter from the others, who follow. The young soldier, thus left alone, finds himself troubled with mingled feelings of resentment at the girl's impudence and admiration for her beauty. He puts the flower in his coat, but at once forgets the whole incident as he sees *Micaela,* whom he joyously welcomes.

She has come to town for a day, and she brings a letter from his mother, also some money, and still something else, which she hesitates over, but finally delivers as it was given her—a kiss from his mother. There is nothing of the coquette about *Micaela,* and her songs are all straightforward, simple airs that win by their very artlessness. Her message is sung with harp accompaniment, and the harmonies are pure and clear. Then follows a duet about the mother and home in the village, and the tenderness of this music reveals that *Don José* is a loving and devoted son. When the duet is ended *Micaela* leaves *José* to read his letter. Music as peaceful as village

church bells comes from the orchestra while the young soldier reads. He touches the letter to his lips and is prepared to obey his mother, especially in the matter of wedding the pretty *Micaela.*

His thoughts are interrupted by a wild scream from the factory and sounds of disputing voices. A number of girls rush from the building, all talking at once, and they fairly besiege *Zuniga* with explanations of what has happened. There was a quarrel and *Carmen* struck another girl—some say she did, and some say she didn't. *Don José,* in the meantime, has gone into the factory, and brings out the struggling *Carmen.* He tells his superior officer about the affair, which ended in one girl's being wounded by "this one." *Carmen* tosses her head, and when the officer asks what she has to say in defense she looks into his face and sings "la-la-la-la!" Her impertinence would be almost repellent were it not that her voice is "like the wooing wind," and even her "la-la-la" is bewitching. Further questioning only elicits the same response, and the officer angrily declares she may finish her song in prison. He orders *Don José* to fetter her hands and keep watch while he goes to make out the order of imprisonment. While all are gone an interesting scene occurs between the prisoner and her keeper. The latter ties her hands, and says he must take her soon to prison as his superior has ordered. *Carmen,* in her present attitude of charming helplessness, announces with sweetest tones that *Don José* will help her, in spite of the orders, because "I know you love me!" This is too much. When *José* recovers from his astonishment at her audacity he commands her to sit still and not speak to him—"not another word." *Carmen* nods her head in saucy obedience, and talks no more; she only sings! Sings

of "an inn near the ramparts of Sevilla" where she will go to dance the Seguidilla. The song is in the rhythm of that dance, and its sinuous melody is handled by *Carmen* like a toy. She composes words to suit the occasion: "My heart is free and willing to love whoever loves me."

Don José, who has been trying to ignore her, but without success, tells her again to stop. She looks up with a grieved expression and her prettiest smile, and says she is not talking, only singing to herself and thinking; he surely can not forbid her thinking! So she goes on thinking aloud about a "certain officer, who is not captain, nor even lieutenant—he is only a brigadier; but still he is great enough to win the heart of Carmen." Such words, music, glances, and smiles are more than *Don José* can resist, and it is not long before he succumbs to her witchery. He unties her hands and asks desperately, "Carmen, Carmen, do you mean it?" And for answer she softly sings to him that rapturous song of the Seguidilla.

The orchestra now starts up a lively repetition of the last chattering chorus, and with it the superior officer, *Zuniga,* reenters. He hands *José* the order and bids him lead the prisoner to her destination. *Carmen* holds her hands back, as tho still fettered, and she tells *José* in an undertone to let her push him as they march off, and during the commotion thus aroused she will escape. Then she turns to *Zuniga,* and with the greatest effrontery favors him with a fragment of the "Habanera" song, to which refrain she marches away with apparent docility. The whole group of cigaret-girls and young men follow after. Just as they are turning to the bridge, *Carmen* escapes as she has planned. She throws back the rope

from her hands and runs off laughing. It is fun for all but *Don José,* who for this neglect of duty is himself escorted to prison.

Bizet has preceded every act with an orchestral introduction called the *entr'acte,* which presents some important theme or portrays the character of the scene. Thus before the curtain rises on the second act we become familiar with a new and happy melody, which we later on recognize and welcome. After the *entr'acte* the stringed instruments, with a touch of the triangle and tambourine, hold the supremacy as they breathe forth faint, weird harmonies that flit about like moving shadows. The scene presents an interior view of the inn "near the ramparts of Sevilla."

It is evening, and amid the glow of soft lights *Carmen* and her gypsy friends are entertaining some officers with their dancing. She further enlivens the scene by singing a Bohemian song, whose liquid phrases fall upon the air like the soft splashing of a fountain.

After the song and dance it is time for the inn to close, but at this moment shouts and hurrahs are heard from without. It is a torchlight procession in honor of *Escamillo,* the bull fighter, who presently enters amid general acclamations. He wears a gorgeous costume, and sings a rousing song about the exciting life of a toreador. This barytone aria is the most famous of the many popular numbers which comprise this opera. Its strongly accented rhythm and pulsating theme immediately suggest the blaze of lights and blare of trumpets which belong to the arena.

Escamillo soon perceives *Carmen,* and as quickly falls in love. She dismisses him with a coquettish remark that might mean much or little, and then all depart ex-

cepting *Carmen* and her two gypsy friends, *Frasquita* and *Mercedes*. These are soon joined by their comrades, the two smugglers, who softly tell of a new enterprise which will require the "ladies' assistance." *Frasquita* and *Mercedes* consent to leave at once. Then follows an exquisite quintet, sung with tempo prestissimo and tones pianissimo. *Carmen* suddenly astounds them with the assertion that she can not go, and gives as her reason that she is awaiting *Don José,* who to-day is released after two months' imprisonment, and further adds that she loves him. They take this at first as a joke; but finding her determined, they suggest that she induce *José* to join them. She says she will try, and the rest hurry out as they hear the young soldier approaching.

He is singing a gay barrack song, and thus comes to *Carmen* with his heart in his voice and soul in his eyes. She welcomes him impulsively, and ere long she sings and dances for his amusement. Her song is but an accompaniment to the dance—a low, crooning melody without words which resembles the contented purring of a magnificent feline as she glides and sways with a splendid grace around the infatuated *José*. A bugle-call is heard in the distance, a summons the soldier must obey, and he stops *Carmen* in the midst of her dance. She thinks he is joking and commences again; but when she actually realizes that he is going to leave her, that he finds it *possible* to leave, a perfect whirlwind succeeds the sirocco. She throws him his cap and sword, and bids him go forever if such is his love. Poor *Don José* remonstrates, but she will not listen until at last he forces her to hear how real and true is his love for her. He draws from his coat the little flower she threw at him two months ago, and he tells how, during all his days in prison, it was

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CALVÉ AS "CARMEN"

his dearest treasure. This music is more like the song of a pilgrim at a sacred shrine than a song of love, it is so simple and sincere. Its tenderness seems to reach even the heart of *Carmen,* for she now turns and with entreating looks and wooing tones she coaxes him to go with her and lead the free life of a bandit.

The accompaniment is like the distant prancing of wild horses and the melody like the forest wind, low as a whisper, but sweeping before it all the fluttering doubts of a weak conscience. It is desertion, disgrace, dishonor, that *Carmen* asks of him, and *José* recoils. He is just on the point of refusing when a knock is heard at the door and *Zuniga* enters. He is himself in love with *Carmen,* and has presumed thus to return after the others have gone, in hopes of finding her alone. On discovering the presence of *Don José* he is angry and orders him away; but *José's* jealousy is also aroused and he firmly refuses to obey. A duel would ensue did not *Carmen* quickly call her friends. They seize *Zuniga,* and to avoid being denounced must keep him prisoner until they have made sure their escape. *Carmen* turns to *José* and asks once more if he will be one of them. As there is now no alternative, he consents, whereupon *Carmen,* with light steps and light heart, rushes to his arms like a sunbeam, dispelling for the moment all clouds of memory and doubt. The free, fearless measures of her mountain song are heard again as all sing about the gypsies' life of liberty. They all go off as the curtain falls.

The next *entr'acte* is sometimes called the intermezzo, for it divides the opera—the comedy from the tragedy—and it contains the first premonition of sorrow. As the curtain rises we hear a stealthy, shivering theme that well characterizes the scene before us—a wild, picturesque

ravine, which is the smugglers' retreat. Some gypsies are reclining on the rocks; others soon enter, and sing a quite enticing chorus about the dangers and pleasures of their profession. Two leaders of the band then go off to reconnoiter, while the others rest. *Don José* is seen standing on one of the rocks, and when *Carmen* rather moodily inquires his thoughts he tells her of his mother in the village, who still believes him to be an honest man. *Carmen* coldly advises him to go back to her. Quick as thought-suggestion the orchestra recalls the tragic motif which we had almost forgotten. It causes us to feel with *José* the sting of *Carmen's* words.

Our attention is now directed to *Frasquita* and *Mercedes,* who are seated on a bale of goods and trying their fortunes. A light staccato accompaniment sustains their still lighter song. The dainty measures are flung up like bubbles, reflecting the gay colors of the cards, which chance to be all diamonds and hearts. *Carmen* also tries her luck, but only the dark cards fall to her—death, always death; and to the superstitious gypsy this is like a knell. Again that tragic, mournful theme, like the extended hand of fate, feels its way slowly but surely through the orchestra, and then *Carmen* sings a meditative, melancholy refrain about the cards whose "decrees are never false." The music is in a low key, as tho kept under and depressed by her despair, and it touches our sympathy to see the sunny, frivolous *Carmen* for once thoughtful.

The two smugglers presently return and report that three coast-guards intercept the way. The girls promise to entertain and divert these while the men make off with the booty. To the strains of a rollicking chorus they all go out, after stationing *Don José* as watch on one of the

highest rocks. At this moment *Micaela,* with a guide, comes timidly forward. She has dared to follow the smugglers to this retreat for the purpose of seeing *José* and begging him to return. She has tried to be brave, but her heart now trembles, and this fact she confesses in her beautiful and best aria, "Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante" ("I say that nothing terrifies me"). As she begs Heaven to strengthen her courage, the soft arpeggios of the instruments seem to rise like incense and carry her sweet prayer with them. She presently perceives *José* in the distance and tries to attract his attention, but he is watching another intruder, on whom he now fires. *Micaela* hides herself in terror as *Escamillo* enters and philosophically studies the newly made bullet-hole in his cap. *Don José* also comes down to interrogate this visitor. The toreador good-naturedly informs him that he has fallen in love with a gypsy girl, *Carmen,* and comes to find her. He also adds, "It is known that a young soldier recently deserted his post for her, but she no longer loves him." Jealousy seems but a feeble word to describe the feelings of *Don José* on hearing this. He quickly reveals his identity and challenges the toreador. After a short duet, which contains chromatic crescendos of blind fury for the tenor and insolent intervals for the barytone, they fight. *Carmen,* for the second time, averts a duel by her timely entrance. She calls for help, and the whole troupe of gypsies rush in. They separate the rivals and order them to suspend their quarrel, as all is now arranged for the journey. Before bidding farewell *Escamillo* invites all to his next bull-fight in Seville. "Whoever loves me will come,"—this with a tender look to *Carmen* that maddens *José.*

Escamillo goes off and the others also start, but they

suddenly discover *Micaela* in her hiding-place and bring her forward. She is frightened and rushes to *José* for protection, begging him to go home with her. *Carmen* cruelly seconds this entreaty, and then *José* turns upon her: "Take care, Carmen!" The words are menacing, but not so the music. *José* suffers more than he hates, and, instead of the rising tones of anger, the harmonies which struggle upward are continually repulsed as they reach the top, like a wild bird that beats its wings against prison bars. When *Micaela* finally tells him that his mother is dying, *Don José* consents to go. He calls out to *Carmen,* "We shall meet again!" She pays little heed to his words, but a glad smile lights her features as she hears in the distance the song of the toreador. And with this melody the act ends.

The final scene represents the gates of the arena where occurs the great bull-fight, and the preceding *entr'acte* is like the flaming advertisement of a circus, exciting and enthusing from first to last. The opening chorus is sung by venders who throng the square and cry their wares. After this the arena music announces the entrance of the performers. They come in on horseback, and amid enthusiastic greetings from the crowd ride into the arena. *Escamillo,* the hero of the hour, enters with *Carmen* at his side. The public cry, "Viva, Escamillo!" and burst into a vociferous singing of the "Toreador Song." *Carmen* is radiant as the dawn, and the bull-fighter wears colors and spangles that quite eclipse any soldier's uniform. Before he enters the ring they sing a love-duet that displays more depth of feeling than we should expect from a Zingara.

When the toreador has gone and the arena gates are closed, *Mercedes* and *Frasquita* anxiously inform *Carmen*

that *Don José* has been seen in the crowd, and they urge her to leave; but she declares she is not afraid of *José* or any one. They leave her alone, and presently the rejected lover appears before her. But not in anger or to avenge does *Don José* present himself. He is too utterly dejected and broken-hearted for that. He comes only to entreat and plead for her love. Before he speaks we are warned by the ever-terrible death-theme which has hung over the whole opera like a suspended sword, that the end is near. But *Don José* does not know this. Neither does *Carmen,* else perhaps she would not so ruthlessly spurn him when he begs her to go with him and begin a new life. When he piteously asks if she no longer loves him, her answer is a decisive "Non; je ne t'aime plus." But words have lost their sting for poor *José*. In a minor melody, that seems to cry out for pity, he says he loves her still. He offers to remain a bandit—anything, all things! And then the pathetic minor melody breaks into the major as he desperately adds: "Only, Carmen, do not leave me!" At this moment a fanfare and applause are heard in the arena, which cause *Carmen's* face to glow with pleasure as she thinks of *Escamillo*. She tries to rush past *Don José* into the amphitheater, but he intercepts her and forces her to confess that she loves this man whom they applaud. Once again the gay fanfare is heard, and *Carmen* tries to pass.

It is now that the tragic motif takes possession of the orchestra and dominates all else. Fearful and appalling sound those five notes which form the theme as they are repeated in various keys. In a frenzy of anguish *Don José* asks *Carmen* for the last time to go with him. She refuses, and then, as the toreador's song of triumph announces his success, *José* stabs the beautiful gypsy,

who falls at his feet like a crushed butterfly. The gates of the arena are thrown open and its glittering pageant comes forth, while *José,* with insane grief, calls out, "I have killed her—*Carmen*—whom I adored!"

There is no climax more thrilling on the lyric stage than this death of *Carmen.*

CHAPTER XX

"HAMLET"

OF ALL Shakespeare's plays, "Hamlet" is the most difficult to surround with music and adapt for the lyric stage. It is more scholastic than dramatic, and for this reason composers have passed it by with the single exception of Ambroise Thomas. His accomplishment certainly deserves more commendation than was bestowed by an irrate critic who said: "There are four weary, dreary acts before you come to the music." This assertion is correct in one way, for the opera is indeed long—quite too long; but there is, nevertheless, much that is beautiful in those four acts preceding the mad scene. But even were this not the case, that last scene is so exquisite that it would atone for any amount of previous ennui.

Thomas has given his principal rôle to the barytone, which seems an innovation. Whenever a lower voice has been honored with the leading rôle in a Grand Opera the reason is found in the character, as the jovial "Barber of Seville," the deformed "Rigoletto," the accursed "Flying Dutchman"; but the tenor has always held undisputed possession of the lover's part. It takes us some little time to become reconciled to this barytone-voiced young prince. But we finally realize that he is less a lover than a philosopher, which propably explains why Thomas turned from the tenor.

The opera opens with a short and somber prelude that closely resembles the later introduction to the ghost-scene. It is therefore more descriptive of the "melancholy Dane"

than of the first act, which is brilliant throughout. The curtain rises upon a state hall in the palace, where have been celebrated the wedding and coronation of *Claudius* and *Gertrude,* brother and widow of the late king. A sturdy march that is quite Danish in character accompanies the grand entrance of the king and queen. That music can express nationality is clearly evinced by this march, which possesses a rugged, North-sea atmosphere that differs from all others. The first aria is given by the king, who eulogizes his new-made wife, "our sometime sister, now our queen." After this bass solo with its pleasing rhythm and satisfying cadences the queen inquires for her son *Hamlet,* who is not among the revelers. But her anxieties are drowned by the festive music that recommences and continues until the entire court have made their exit.

The music now changes to a meditative, minor mood, which announces the entrance of *Hamlet.* He shares no joy on this occasion of his mother's wedding, and his first words are a short recitative about "frailty, thy name is woman."

His soliloquy is followed by a phrase in the orchestra—a timid, questioning sort of introduction which before the opera is over we learn to associate with the gentle *Ophelia.* She enters and addresses *Hamlet,* her betrothed, with an anxious inquiry about his intended departure from Denmark. On learning from his own lips that the report is true, she asks why he leaves, and begins to doubt his love. There is a daintiness and delicacy to all of *Ophelia's* music; and in this short melody, so admirably blended with the accompaniment, there is a wooing charm that diverts even *Hamlet* from his grief. He clasps her hands, and with thrilling fervor bids her—

"Doubt that the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt Truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love."

This is the great theme of the opera, the center-stone of the musical crown that the French composer has given to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Its love-laden melody would carry conviction to a less trusting heart than *Ophelia's*. She receives it like truth from heaven. Its memory lingers ever, and even in her after madness, when the words have no meaning, we hear them again "like sweet bells jangled out of tune." There follows a duet based upon *Hamlet's* vow. The soprano voice occasionally runs up in some happy little roulades which seem like the outburst of joy which can not confine itself to the prescribed theme. However long the whole opera, we certainly could not spare a note from the love-duet; it ends only too soon.

Ophelia's brother, *Laertes,* comes in. He is a soldier, and has just received a commission which requires his speedy departure; so he sings a farewell to his sister and bids *Hamlet* be as a brother to her in case he never returns. This first and only cavatina of Laertes is well worth a good artist. It is melodious and pleasing, even when compared to the previous duet. As he finishes, gay music is heard from the inner hall. *Ophelia* asks *Hamlet* to join the festivities, but he declines and retires sorrowfully as some pages and young officers enter. They sing a unique and merry chorus without accompaniment, which is interrupted by the entrance of *Horatio* and *Marcellus,* who inquire for *Hamlet.* They declare they have seen the ghost of the late king, and seek to apprize *Hamlet*

of the fact. The merry-makers laugh and call it a delusion; but the two friends continue their search for the young prince. The dance music is resumed, and so fascinating and emphatic is its rhythm that our pulses throb in tempo long after the curtain descends.

The second act represents the esplanade outside of the castle. It is a chilly moonlight night—a sharp contrast to the beam of lights from within and the blare of dance music which ever and anon reaches our ears. But the prelude which opens the act is thoroughly descriptive of the scene before us. It has deep, rumbling tremolos and chilling chromatic crescendos, with here and there a moaning, wo-weighted theme that is piteous to hear. There is much singing without the orchestra and much orchestra without singing in this scene of the esplanade, which accounts for the charge against it of being "rather thin ghost music." *Horatio* and *Marcellus* are the first to enter. They are soon joined by *Hamlet,* to whom they recount the strange visitation of the previous night. As they wait and watch for the specter to reappear, a gay fanfare from the palace jars upon the stillness. Strains of the wedding-march are heard, and there seems abundant reason for the dead king to rise from his grave! *Hamlet* utters expletives over the mockery of such gaiety within, while "here is the shadow of mourning." His words are accompanied by an oft-repeated minor phrase of four notes which is stealthy and fearful. This ghost-theme alternates with a single monotonous tone that represents the twelve strokes of a clock. *Hamlet* hushes his singing; there is a soft, eerie tremolo of the violins; the pale moonlight falls upon the castle's turreted towers. *Marcellus* and *Horatio* speak in whispers, when suddenly the orchestra gives a great crash of brass and cymbals

that makes your blood freeze. The fantom has appeared. Now follows the incantation, so called because *Hamlet* conjures the spirit to speak to him. This music is based entirely upon the four-note ghost-theme, which is elaborated and carried by the orchestra through many forms. At last the specter speaks, and in a deep monotone informs *Hamlet* how he was murdered by the present *King*. His own brother stole his life, his wife, and his throne. He bids *Hamlet* avenge this terrible crime, and then disappears. *Hamlet* cries out in a theme large and grand, "Farewell to fame, love, and happiness!" Revenge shall hereafter be the aim of his life.

The peaceful love-music greets our ears as we look upon the next scene, which reveals the gardens of the palace. The superb theme of *Hamlet's* vow, "Never doubt I love," rings out in clear, untroubled octaves as the fair *Ophelia* comes forward with a book in her hand. She is trying to read, but thoughts of *Hamlet* constantly intrude themselves. "He has not touched my hand for quite two days, and seems to avoid my presence." She again turns to her book and reads aloud. *Ophelia* reads very beautifully. Thomas has with music conveyed the impression of enunciating words from a book. We would know she was reading even if the book were not visible nor the words audible, and yet it is not by means of a monotone that this idea is conveyed. It is a simple song melody, and the effect is probably due to the rhythm rather than the intervals. After reading one stanza, *Hamlet's* vow—that theme so deep and true—is again heard, and the hero himself comes thoughtfully upon the scene. He is in the background, but Ophelia has seen him, and she quickly makes a pretense of reading. She listens for every step as he draws nearer, and

believes he will speak. He sees her and at first comes forward, but then remembers that he has foresworn love; and thinking she has not seen him, he quietly retires. Poor *Ophelia* throws down her book in wildest grief, and a song of despair springs from her heart. "Vows have wings and they fly with the dawn; the day which gives them birth also sees them die." Every note is like a tear, and the harmonies are plaintive and pitiful.

The *Queen* presently enters and is grieved to find *Ophelia* weeping. The latter explains that *Hamlet* no longer loves her, and she begs permission to leave the court; but the *Queen* puts other ideas in her head. She says that *Hamlet* has also acted strangely toward her, and she believes his mind is affected. For this reason she asks *Ophelia* to remain, and hopes her presence may restore him. This first song of the *Queen,* who must have a mezzo-soprano voice of dramatic quality, combines dignity and pathos. Its mood does not contrast, but harmonizes with the previous aria. *Ophelia* accepts the *Queen's* advice, and then goes off as the *King* enters. He confers with his wife about *Hamlet's* alarming behavior, but their conversation is interrupted by the *Prince* himself, who greets them moodily and assumes more vagaries than he feels. He is constantly seeking to entrap the *King* into some sign or remark which will verify the *Ghost's* charge of murder. He has therefore planned to have a play enacted which shall depict the *King's* crime. His invitation to this theatrical entertainment is welcomed by the unsuspecting *King* and *Queen,* who are delighted that he thus seeks diversion. As they go off, *Hamlet* explains tragically, "Patience, my father, patience!" and the orchestra reveals to us thoughts of

revenge, for we hear again that ponderous and melancholy theme which ended the "Ghost scene."

Hamlet is now joined by the actors whom he has engaged for the play. They sing a characteristic chorus about their several talents, and then *Hamlet* explains to them the plot they are to enact—how a king whom he calls Gonzago shall be poisoned by his brother, who afterward places the crown on his own head and marries the widow. After this preliminary, *Hamlet* calls for wine and bids the players make merry. He sings to them a drinking-song of dazzling exuberance.

It is strange how universally successful operatic composers are in the matter of drinking-songs. One can name off-hand more popular *chansons bachique* than any other one style of aria. There are various well-known serenades and prayers and spinning-songs, but of drinking-songs there are any number. "Lucrezia Borgia," "Rigoletto," "Traviata," "Huguenots," "Cavalleria Rusticana,"—their drinking-songs are heard every day on the hand-organs in the street. And so in "Hamlet" its drinking-song is one of the most celebrated numbers of the opera. Its bubbling rhythm and hilarious melody are continued even after the song is ended and the curtain descends. It lingers like the effect of wine.

Act III is the play scene. There is a small stage erected at one side of the spacious palace hall, and opposite this is a throne for the *King* and *Queen.* The orchestra carries everything before it with the rousing Danish march which accompanies the ceremonious entrance of the entire court. This composition ranks with the drinking-song in popularity. When all are assembled, *Hamlet* places himself in a position to watch the *King,* and as the mimic play proceeds he explains the action, which is

all in pantomime. The orchestral descriptive music of this play within a play is beautiful and interesting. As in *Ophelia's* reading, the simple melody and hesitating rhythm again convey the impression of something inserted, something apart from the real action of the play. *Hamlet* becomes more and more excited as the play goes on, for he sees unmistakable signs of uneasiness in the *King's* expression; and when at last the mimic murderer pours poison into the ear of his sleeping victim, the *King* rises in anger and orders the players away. *Hamlet* in a delirium of vengeful joy cries out the *King's* guilt. He pushes his way through the surrounding courtiers, and with unbridled fury accuses the murderer. He is sustained by a perfect tidal wave of chords from the orchestra, which dash and beat and break, but only harm the good ship they bear instead of the rock they attack. The people regard *Hamlet's* charge as an outburst of madness, and he presently lends credence to this belief by singing with wild hilarity the drinking-song of the previous act. The following strong and seething chorus of dismay is again interrupted at the very end by *Hamlet's* mad song—

> "Life is short and death is near;
> We'll sing and drink while yet we may."

With a wild mocking laugh he falls into *Horatio's* arms as the *King* and court withdraw.

The great feature of the fourth act is the scene between *Hamlet* and his mother, but there is much besides. The scene represents the *Queen's* apartment in the palace, and the first number is *Hamlet's* soliloquy. He blames himself and deems it cowardice that he did not strike the

King dead when he had the opportunity. Then follows the musical arrangement of "To be or not to be," a speech so unsuited to music that Thomas has cut it down to a few lines. *Hamlet* presently sees the *King* approaching, and he conceals himself behind a curtain with the intention of attacking him. But the *King* thinks himself alone, and in agony of mind he kneels on the prie-dieu and prays. It is an impressive composition, this prayer with its cathedral harmonies and blending accompaniment. *Hamlet* glides softly toward the door, for he can not kill even his father's murderer at prayer. The *King,* who has heard the footsteps, cries out in terror, for he fancies it was the *Ghost* of his brother. *Polonius,* the father of *Ophelia,* quickly enters and reassures the *King.* They walk out arm in arm, and from their few words it is gleaned that *Polonius* was an accomplice to the crime. *Hamlet* hears them, and is horrified to learn this fact about *Ophelia's* father. At this moment the *Queen* and *Ophelia* enter, and the former announces to *Hamlet* that it is her wish as well as the *King's* that his marriage shall take place at once. The *Prince* blankly refuses to obey in spite of the *Queen's* urging; but his heart endures a struggle when the poor *Ophelia* sings of her grief and returns to him his ring. The sweet minor strain in her song implies a sad resignation that is more touching than intense lamentation. She goes out weeping. The *Queen* then turns to *Hamlet* and upbraids him for his faithlessness. She presently recurs to the terrible scene at the play, and utters the famous words, "Thou hast thy father much offended."

The scene which follows demands great dramatic ability of the *Queen,* as well as vocal strength. After a sharp and active recitative dialog, in which *Hamlet*

announces himself as her judge and no longer her son, she sings a fine entreaty that the tenderness of the son may mitigate the severity of the judge. It is a strong and powerful theme, but *Hamlet* is obdurate. He contrasts the late *King* with the present one in words and tones that make his mother cower. She again pleads for mercy and forgiveness, and finally falls in a swoon as the stage is darkened and the *Ghost* appears. *Hamlet* trembles before this admonisher. The music of the incantation is again heard, and the fantom bids *Hamlet* spare his mother, but "fail not to avenge." As the *Ghost* disappears the instruments are weighted with that great and gloomy theme of revenge which seems to descend and enwrap the whole scene like a dark, heavy mist. The *Queen* awakens; but there is little more seen or heard before the curtain falls.

Act V is known as the "Mad Scene," one of the most beautiful, most ideal, and most difficult creations ever put upon the lyric stage. It is seldom performed, merely because there are few artists who can adequately sing its astonishing music. There are other mad scenes in existence. The one from "Lucia di Lammermoor" is very celebrated, but its music no more expresses the vagaries of madness than does any other florid aria. Of course, lavish colorature seems appropriate and is considered imperative; but Donizetti's florid fancies are mere plumes and flounces draped upon a melody, whereas with Thomas these form the texture of the theme. The French composer well knows the worth of his mad music, and he has taken pains to present it most advantageously. You are not ushered at once from the grim and gruesome harmonies of the last act to this wealth of inspiration, but are first entertained by a ballet of shepherds and

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CALVÉ AS "OPHELIA" IN "HAMLET"

shepherdesses. During this dance we become accustomed to the beautiful rural landscape, the gentle stream at the back and the drooping willows. We are also brought under the spell of a different kind of music; these pastoral ballet motifs are very charming. They are light and fantastic, but at the same time suggest a midsummer peace and tranquillity.

At last the dainty dance is ended, and then the rustic group perceive a strange figure approaching—a beautiful maid, with her flowing hair adorned with bits of straw and wild flowers. Her white dress is torn, and her bare arms carry a straggling bunch of flowers which she plays with and caresses. That exquisite inquiring little introduction which we heard in the first act again announces the entrance of *Ophelia*. She glances a moment at the pretty peasants, and then, with intuitive politeness, asks permission to join in their sport. There is a subtle pathos about this first little phrase, which is sung without accompaniment, and is simple as a child's question. She goes on to tell them how she left the palace at dawn and no one has followed. "The tears of night were still on the ground and the lark poured forth its morning song." A perfect bird-throat warble of trills and fluttering staccatos follows this memory of the lark. But her thoughts are varied, and she suddenly turns and asks: "Why do you whisper to each other? Don't you know me? Hamlet is my betrothed, and I—I am Ophelia." Then she tells them, in tones that rest upon the accompaniment like lilies on a lake, how *Hamlet* vowed always to love her and that she has given him her heart in exchange. "If any one should tell you that he will leave and forget me, do not believe it. Believe nothing they tell you, for Hamlet is my betrothed, and I—I am Ophelia." But in spite

of this assertion of *Hamlet's* faith, there is throughout all the music a ring of perpetual pain. She clasps her hand to her head with terror, and exclaims: "If he were false I think I should lose my reason!"

The flowers again hold her attention, and she plays with them as the orchestra commences a ravishing waltz theme. She at first pays little heed to the music, but its gay melody at last drifts to her soul and finds immediate expression. The difficult phrases fall from her lips like petals from a flower. Gleeful chromatics and happy trills are also thrown in, and we would soon forget it was the sad *Ophelia* did she not suddenly tire of this extravagant virtuosity. She turns to the shepherds and bids them harken to the song she will sing. Then follows a ballad whose moaning, minor harmonies sound like a sighing breeze. It is about the sirens beneath the water who lure men to its glassy depths. The wearied, worried mind of the mad girl now revels in a wild, merry laugh, which is as quickly followed by passionate sobs; but she finally remembers to finish her song about the siren. This strange, sad melody possesses a weird charm that is irresistible. Again she breaks into hilarious laughter and uncontrolled weeping. Grief without hope and joy without memory alternate in rapid succession. The music of this portion defies description. It is a perfect conflagration of impossible staccatos and scales. With one last sweeping chromatic run, that rushes like the whistling wind from low *D* to high *E*, *Ophelia* kneels down with her flowers and thinks only of them. The peasants retire from the scene, and the orchestra take up fragments of the waltz.

They play for some moments, while *Ophelia* contentedly rearranges her bouquet. But presently a won-

derful change comes over the music. We hear only the string instruments and flute, and soon these, too, are hushed, while out of the air a magical song arises. It is the siren's ballad, faint as a vision but with full harmonies. Thomas has produced this effect of dream-music by having the chorus sing behind the scenes with closed mouth. This soft humming of a hidden chorus well resembles the buried voices of water-nymphs. *Ophelia* at once recognizes the song, and she is drawn by the music toward the stream, where she hopes to see the sirens. All unconscious, she pushes her way through the rushes and reeds on the bank. The chorus has ceased, and only the tender, liquid tones of the harp now fill the air. *Ophelia* steps too far and soon falls into the "weeping brook." Her dress bears her up for a time, and we hear her sweetly singing as she floats down the stream. It is no longer the ballad or the gay waltz, but quite another theme to which her memory now clings. It is *Hamlet's* glorious vow—

"Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love."

Ophelia ends her song with a lingering high note of such silvery beauty that it seems like a far-away star in the dark night of death.

CHAPTER XXI

LILLIAN NORDICA—A TÊTE-À-TÊTE

IT WAS during one of Patti's farewell seasons at the old Academy of Music, that a young American girl, of the name of Lillian Norton, first appeared as a prima donna. She made a success, but not a sensation, for she had not then the halo of a European glory, and in those days people were too intent on the passing star to note any rising one.

But later on, when she Italianized her name, they applauded the same voice more loudly, tho their attention was still more directed to the foreign artists who appeared every year.

The American girl all this time never relaxed her determination, but kept on working with a will, learning rôles there was no prospect of using, and studying all things in her line. At last she was engaged by the Metropolitan Opera Company; but her name was not printed at the top of the list, and she was not held out as the magnet to fill the house on the opening night. In the end, tho, she sang oftener than any of the other sopranos, for when they were indisposed she it was that always came forward. *There was never a rôle she could not sing, and never a time she was not ready.*

The dormant appreciation of her countrymen was at last thoroughly aroused. From then her success swept onward with unabating force. The enthusiasm she inspired the following season in New York was so great that one large club of opera-goers presented her with a diamond tiara, and that year the people had to stand in

line when buying seats to hear Madame Lillian Nordica.

The Waldorf-Astoria, where she lived when in New York, is quite a contrast to the humble New England home in Farmington, Me., where she was born. This hotel is a city in itself, and the visitor who inquires for some distinguished resident is conducted personally along the marble avenues and carpeted byways and through the beautiful "palm-garden." The door of Madame Nordica's apartment was opened by a white-capped maid, who seated the caller and then left the room. It was the day of a blizzard, and from this sixth-floor elevation the snow-storm without was of superb fury. It battered against the window as tho maddened by the sight within of the prima donna's cosy parlor, the shaded electric lights, the wide-open grand piano, and the numerous long-stemmed roses, in various tall jars, fragrant and peaceful as a summer's day. Through the silken draperies of a doorway could be heard the sound of voices, of occasional laughter, and then—a scale, a trill, and a soft high note. It was an exquisite Grand-Opera effect with the whistling storm by way of orchestral accompaniment.

Soon the curtains were parted and Madame Nordica entered—a woman of regal height and figure, but with manners thoroughly American and democratic.

"Do you mean to say you came through all this storm to see me! You are certainly very brave." These were her first words; then she drew up a comfortable chair, and added: "Well, it's just the sort of day to talk and take things easy."

Madame Nordica's tones conveyed even more than her words, for her voice, in conversation, was noticeably beautiful, fascinating in its variety, its softness, and its purity. Her face, too, was beautiful and very expressive;

she had a remarkably fine complexion, perfect teeth, and thoughtful blue eyes set well apart.

On the occasion of my call Madame Nordica wore a house-gown of pale, clinging blue silk, and, with the exception of her wedding-ring, had on no jewelry.

She told me first of her birthplace and home.

"I was the sixth girl, and I think my parents were rather tired out by the time I came. I wasn't even baptized!" Then she talked of her work.

"I studied first in Boston, and sang there in church; but I made my concert début here in New York with Gilmore at the old Madison Square Garden. He took me with him to Europe afterward. When I returned to America I sang in all the Italian operas, especially Verdi's."

Madame Nordica still holds in our memory a supreme place as a singer of the Italian school, altho her greatest fame was won in the Wagner rôles.

When asked if she had ever met Verdi, the singer replied in the affirmative.

"I met him in Italy, but only once. I was much better acquainted with Gounod, and also the modern composers, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, etc., but now I devote my chief time to Wagner."

This led to inquiries about Madame Cosima Wagner.

"Ah, I lived right with her for three months, and it was a great privilege for me. Her husband's music is to her like her very eyes. She taught me the German and helped me in every way. 'Lohengrin' had never been sung in Baireuth, and I was to create there the rôle of *Elsa.*"

A remarkable honor this was, indeed: to be the first *Elsa* in Wagner's own temple, under the guidance of his

own wife, with the grave of the great composer fairly in sight, and memories of the "Mad King" on all sides—the king whose ears were deaf to the functions of State, but open to the art of heaven.

"It was a great opportunity for me, but I sometimes thought I would have to give it up. Oh! I have been so discouraged; I have wept *barrels of tears!*"

This is a kind message for a great singer to send to the many struggling aspirants who may be working under discouragement.

Madame Nordica insisted that "work is everything. The voice is but the material; it is the stone from which the cathedral is built."

After her great success in Baireuth, the American prima donna sang *Elsa* in New York.

"But again I had to sing in Italian, for the rest of the company had not learned the German. It was through my efforts that they have since studied these rôles in the original, and we now sing all the Wagner operas in German."

It was a great musical event when Jean de Reszke and Madame Nordica appeared as *Tristan* and *Isolde*. This love-tragedy done in music is perhaps the most profound of all operas. It is somber with sorrow throughout; even the great love-duet in the second act is too intense and grand in its motifs ever to be called happy. It is not the joyous emotion of youth, but the fervor of maturity, where life itself is staked for a mighty love. This second act is a wondrous musical scene. It is in the moonlit gardens of the Cornish castle where *Tristan* and *Isolde* meet clandestinely, while *Bragaene,* the faithful attendant, keeps watch in the tower above. She is not seen, but the calm, sustained tones of her watch-tower

song soar out in contrast to the intense love-music like a beacon-light on a turbulent sea.

Another very popular rôle of Madame Nordica's, tho altogether different in style, was *Valentine* in "The Huguenots." Her sustained and crescendoed high *C* in the third act of this opera was worth a long journey to hear. Madame Fursch-Madi in years agone used to sing this rôle very grandly, but she was plain of feature; whereas Madame Nordica's *Valentine* was so beautiful to behold that the audience was aroused to greatest sympathy with the hero's struggle between love and duty.

"Our art is so very legitimate," Madame Nordica remarked thoughtfully. "The painter or the writer can take advice, can be assisted, and has time to consider his work; but we must face the music alone, at the point of the bayonet as it were, for every tone must come at the right moment and on the right pitch. The actress has neither of these requirements to meet. It is very trying, also, to sing one night in German and the next time in some other language. Indeed, every performance is a creation. No wonder we are so insistent on the applause. A painter or writer can say to himself, if his work is not at first well received, 'Just wait till I am dead!' But our fate and fame are decided on the spot."

Madame Nordica grew enthusiastic as she talked, and her face was all animation.

"It is easy to criticize us, but hard for an outsider to appreciate the difficulties of our art. No one is in a place he does not deserve—at least not for any length of time. And I believe, too, that no one lacks for opportunity. When people say, So-and-So has a beautiful voice, and ought to be on the Metropolitan stage, just inquire what that person can do. Very likely she only

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LILLIAN NORDICA

knows one language, and probably can not sing a single act of one opera straight through. Why should she be on the Metropolitan stage? A girl came to me not long ago who had been singing with some English opera company. She had a beautiful voice and said she could sing everything, which I found to be true. I asked why she did not go to Mr. Grau, and she replied, quite disheartened, that he would do nothing for her. Then I asked, 'Are you ready for *anything?* I feel quite sure he could use you now as the page in "Romeo and Juliet."' 'Oh, I wouldn't sing a secondary rôle!' she quickly exclaimed. Now that girl makes a great mistake. To sing well one beautiful aria on the same stage with such artists as the two De Reszkes and Madame Melba would do her more good than to sing the first rôles in a poor company."

Madame Nordica spoke very earnestly as she related this story of a lost opportunity, which so plainly points its own moral. Another incident she told gives the reverse side of the same idea:

"I remember one day some singers were discussing another member of their company, and claiming that he did not deserve his high position; but I protested, and said: 'Just consider what that man can do. He knows every language, has a fine stage presence, a good voice, and can sing every rôle in the repertoire. Now where will you get another to fill his place?'

"Our art to-day is very different from what it used to be. People wonder who will replace Patti or some other retiring singer; but if one should appear who adequately filled the vacant place, we would at once hear people saying, 'She only sings colorature rôles and nothing but Italian!' No, the great artist to-day is the one who has mastered all, who does the work of three in

former years, and not one who shines forth temporarily in a few special rôles."

Madame Nordica certainly could speak with authority on this point, for she is one whom we can truly say had "mastered all." Her repertoire was astonishing in its scope and variety; and when we consider that out of eighty-seven million people, which was our population, including the colonies, at that time, she was the only one who sang the three "Brünhildes" of Wagner and also his "Isolde," we can then better appreciate Madame Nordica's achievement. It requires a great mind to grasp and portray these Wagnerian creations. *Brünhilde,* the war goddess, must be both tender and heroic—as it were, divinely human. No composer but Wagner could have imparted these qualities; but he was himself a sort of musical Jove, who wielded the scale like a thunderbolt. If any one doubt this, let him hear and behold the wonderful "Ride of the Walküre," those five war maidens, daughters of *Wotan,* who chase through the clouds on their armored steeds, and call one another in tones unearthly, to an accompaniment of whizzing strings, and clanging brass, and a torrent of intricate chords. The music depicts the fierce clash of the elements, the war-gods in battle, the clamor of shields, and the furious dash of wild horses. Above it all there rings out on the air the weird, far-reaching cry of *Brünhilde,* the leader of the Walküre maidens, and her call is repeated from the East, from the West, from the uttermost mountain-peaks, by her sister spirits, who are sometimes hidden and sometimes revealed by the fast-rushing clouds, through which their steeds gallop and plunge.

Whoever can hear this wonder-work and not bow to Wagner's greatness is surely a musical degenerate.

"My progress has not been by leaps and bounds," Madame Nordica said. "It has been more tortoise-like; and I have sometimes seen others sweep past me with apparently little effort. But in the end justice comes around to all. What is it Mrs. Carter says in 'Zaza' about success? 'It comes from much misery.' Yes, there is very much of that. 'And much work,'—ah, a *great deal* of that. 'And a little luck,'—yes, a *very* little of that; it is not good to have much luck."

As I arose to go, Madame Nordica added with a smile: "You see I could talk on this subject all day. The sum of it is, success comes from steady daily work. You must work well in the morning, and then work some more in the afternoon—and it is well to practise between times too!"

During the opera season of 1907-1908, Madame Nordica was a member of Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera. After that she sang only occasionally with the Boston Opera Company, as in 1912, for she preferred to appear on the concert stage under her own management. She began a tour of the world in 1913, but as a result of exposure when the Dutch steamship *Tasman*, on which she was a passenger, went ashore, she contracted pneumonia, and died at Batavia, Java, May 10, 1914.

CHAPTER XXII

"LOHENGRIN"

THERE seems a very magic about the name "Lohengrin"—a mythical strength and beauty that at once characterize the whole opera. The fault is occasionally found that Wagner's operas are long and at times tedious; but this term is never applied to "Lohengrin." One is disarmed of this suspicion in the very first prelude. Ah, what a prelude is that! It is like the gradual drawing together from empty space of all the music of the spheres. The two first measures are so pianissimo that we scarcely hear them, but the vague and far-away voices come slowly nearer. They mingle with each other and weave in and out, until there is a crescendo mighty and overpowering. We are now prepared for the legendary character of the opera; such music could not represent things earthly.

The curtain rises upon a scene of medieval coloring. It is a woodland upon the banks of the Scheldt in the province of Brabant. A throne is erected on one side, and here the King of Germany is holding court. He is visiting this province of his realm to solicit aid in a coming war. After this fact is announced by the herald, the King arises and in stately phrases greets the people and explains more fully the object of his visit. He closes with the observation that it grieves him to find this province in a state of discord, and he requests *Frederick of Telramund,* an esteemed nobleman of Brabant, to recount the situation.

Frederick, which is the barytone rôle, tells a strange and interesting story. The province is at present without any ducal ruler, owing to the recent mysterious disappearance of the young heir. He was last seen in company with his sister *Elsa.* The two were walking in the forest, but she returned alone and declared she had lost her brother. *Frederick* now charges *Elsa* with murder, and furthermore lays claim to the ducal throne in the name of himself and also his wife *Ortrud,* who bears some kinship to the late duke.

On hearing this charge the King summons *Elsa,* who presently comes forward with bowed head and sorrowful mien. This must have been a thrilling moment at that first performance in Baireuth when Lillian Nordica stepped before the audience. It was not only *Elsa* challenging her accusers, but an American girl challenging German critics under the dome of their most hallowed shrine, with their own music and in their own language. But whatever a singer's emotions may be, she must give no evidence of them. It is wonderful how smoothly these great performances always run. Come what may, the play goes on.

Elsa can say no more in her behalf than has already been given; but when urged by the King to speak freely all that is on her heart, she tells of a wonderful vision which came in her hour of distress. An armored knight, more grand than any she had seen, appeared to her and promised to be her deliverer and champion. This dream-song of *Elsa's* is like a musical apparition so ethereal and *spirituelle;* but one must not seek for these wonderful beauties in the voice-part alone. With Wagner the orchestra is never a mere accompaniment, but more often the principal part. A theme is sometimes begun in the

orchestra and finished by the voice, or it may be altogether with the instruments. Wagner handles the voice like a noble metal which can be fashioned into useful vessels to carry and convey the emotions, in contrast to the Italian composers, who look upon the voice as a jewel to be displayed and admired for its own sake.

To return to *Elsa's* song. It should be understood from the first that each theme in the opera expresses some emotion or idea which is consistenly adhered to throughout. For instance, when *Elsa* describes the knight in her dream, there is heard in the orchestra a few bars of the *Lohengrin-* or *Swan*-song, a theme which is constantly revealing itself in this great kaleidoscope of sound whenever the hero appears or is mentioned. Again, when she speaks of his glittering armor, the splendid warlike motif which asserts itself is the same one that is worked up in the crescendo preceding *Lohengrin's* arrival.

After this strange recital of *Elsa's, Frederick* still maintains his charge against her, and states as her motive for the crime that she hoped to gain the throne for herself. The King decides to settle the question by single combat. *Frederick* must defend himself against whomever may come forward as *Elsa's* champion. This custom is according to the ancient belief that "might is right," and that Heaven itself is the awarder of victory and defeat. The herald of the King announces, with a trumpet-call, the impending combat, and bids "him who will fight for *Elsa* of Brabant to come forth at once." The call dies away, but no one presents himself as her defender, and it appears as tho Heaven already indicates which side is right. *Elsa* piteously begs them to call again. Her wish is granted, and once more the cry rings forth. She falls on her knees, and in tones that vibrate with intense

despair prays Heaven to send her the hero of her dream. "Elsa's Prayer" and "Elsa's Dream" are two of the most beautiful soprano solos in the opera. The prayer is short, but it accomplishes a thrilling crescendo. The final climax is such a passionate outcry that we are not surprized to see an immediate answer granted.

Wagner is a master of crescendos, and he now commences one for the chorus which is truly wonderful in effect. Instead of starting all the voices pianissimo, or even part of the chorus, he starts with a single voice. One man has perceived a knight floating down the river in a boat drawn by a swan. He whispers it to his neighbor, who in turn says, "Look!" and then another and another in quick succession join in exclamations, until all are singing of the strange sight. They rush to the bank, and still the wonder grows. The knight of the swan draws nearer, the orchestra crashes out its stupendous theme, the sopranos ring out above everything, and the whole chorus seems to have doubled its capacity. It is a greeting worthy of the subject, who is *Lohengrin* himself.

No wonder the people subside and look at him with awe as he steps upon the bank. He is clad in shining silver, with a helmet, shield, and sword. His face is fair and his hair is blond. Before noticing the people he turns to the swan and sings it a farewell. This song is only two lines long, and for the most part without accompaniment. It is apparently simple, and differs little from the form of recitative, and yet so rare and strange is this melody that it portrays the legendary character of the opera more than any other phrase. It seems as tho *Lohengrin* is still singing in the mystical language and music of that other world from which he has come.

Every one knows this song by its German name, "Mein lieber Schwan," and it is so much admired and so famous that it is actually paraphrased. A man must be great indeed to be caricatured; how much more is this true of classical music.

Lohengrin soon comes forward and bows before the King, after which he announces that he has been sent as champion "for a noble maid who is falsely accused." But before entering the combat he speaks to *Elsa,* who has previously offered to bestow her hand and heart upon whomever would fight for her. She now reiterates this vow most gladly, and also makes another promise which the strange knight requests—she must never ask from whence he came, nor what his name. Lest there be any misunderstanding, he repeats the impressive phrase in a higher key, and *Elsa* again promises. This short theme is most important. It might be described as the dark motif. It is the one most often heard when *Ortrud* and *Frederick* do their evil plotting, for it is by means of this interdiction of *Lohengrin's* that they eventually succeed in accomplishing *Elsa's* unhappiness.

When the two combatants face each other and all is ready, the herald again comes forward and solemnly proclaims the rules governing such contests. They are interesting to note: "No one shall interfere with the fight under penalty of losing his head or his hand"; and furthermore, no sorcery or witchcraft shall be exerted, for Heaven alone must decide who is right. After this preliminary the King arises and prays for the just judgment of Heaven to show clearly which side is true and which is false. Wagner always favored the bass voice when possible, and so he has given to the King this splendid and impressive composition, with its rich, full chords and

stirring rhythm. The chorus takes up the prayer and finishes it with inspiring breadth and grandeur. The King strikes upon his shield three times and the battle begins. It does not last long, for *Frederick* is soon disarmed and thrown down by *Lohengrin,* who, however, spares his life.

The victory has proven *Elsa's* innocence and *Frederick's* falsehood. The latter is disgraced utterly, while *Lohengrin* is regarded as Heaven's favorite. *Elsa* sings forth her joy and gratitude in melodic phrases which would need no words. The music of *Elsa* and *Lohengrin* is like the music of day—it is so clear, so lucid and full of melody in contrast to the rugged, weird, and gloomy themes of *Ortrud* and *Frederick.*

The great chorus of victory is the last number of this act. It brings in with Wagner's inimitable modulations the martial theme of the previous chorus and also *Elsa's* song of praise. All excepting *Ortrud* and *Frederick* look happy and join in the singing right heartily as the curtain descends.

The second act comprises *Ortrud's* great scene. This rôle may be sung by a contralto, but is better adapted to a mezzo-soprano. *Ortrud* is often called the operatic "Lady Macbeth." She is not only as wicked and ambitious as Shakespeare's heroine, but is also a sorceress of no mean ability, for it is she who made away with *Elsa's* brother; but this fact is not revealed until the last act. She also exerted her power upon *Frederick* with such effect that he believed her to be a prophetess. He was sincere in his accusation against *Elsa,* for *Ortrud* told him she had witnessed the crime herself. But he is now awakened to her wickedness, and the scene opens with his maledictions against her and his abject wretchedness

over his own disgrace. The two are seated upon the church steps facing the palace, where jubilant preparations are going on for the wedding of *Elsa* and *Lohengrin,* which will take place at dawn. It is yet night, and the music is deep and ominous. The dark motif and a new one which seems to represent *Ortrud* are the musical heart and soul of this scene. They stalk about the orchestra like restless fantoms, and are heard in all sorts of keys and instruments. After *Frederick's* great harangue against his wife and fate and everything, she calmly inquires the cause of his anger. She declares that she never deceived him, and that the recent combat was unfairly influenced by *Lohengrin's* sorcery. Such is her power over *Frederick* that he again believes and listens to her plans. She explains how *Lohengrin* may yet be robbed of his power and *Frederick's* honor vindicated. *Elsa* must be induced to ask the hero his name, or he must be wounded, be it ever so slightly. Either of these methods will annihilate his power. This remarkable scene closes with a duet about revenge, which the two voices sing in unison—a point indicative of their renewed unity of purpose.

The music now changes to harmonies that charm and soothe, and *Elsa* appears upon the balcony of her palace. The moonlight falls upon her as she clasps her hands in rapture and sings to the gentle zephyrs of her love. It is a song as peaceful as the night; and in contrast to the recent somber and spectral themes, it beams forth like a diamond against black velvet. This solo of *Elsa's* is one of the most difficult to sing because of its many sustained pianissimo tones. After the last sweet note has died away like a sigh, *Ortrud,* who is still seated on the steps beneath, calls to *Elsa* in a pleading voice. She appeals

to the latter's sympathy by announcing herself as "that most unhappy woman, *Ortrud,*" wife to the disgraced *Frederick.* "We are cursed by God and man, and welcomed nowhere." Thus speaks the sorceress; and *Elsa,* in the goodness of her heart, takes pity and impulsively offers to receive the outcast. She retires from the balcony and presently opens the door below to welcome *Ortrud,* who in this short interim has sung some splendid phrases of gloating animosity. But she kneels like a humble slave before the unsuspecting *Elsa,* who invites her to the wedding and also promises to induce *Lohengrin* to pardon *Frederick.*

As an expression of gratitude, *Ortrud* now offers to exert the power of prophecy for *Elsa's* benefit. Prophecy and sorcery are regarded in different lights: the latter is wicked and implies collusion with the evil one, while the "prophetic eye" is a gift to be coveted. *Ortrud* pretends to possess this power. She forewarns *Elsa* against too great confidence in her hero, and mysteriously hints that he may leave as suddenly as he came. These words are accompanied by the threatening dark motif, which hovers ever near like a lowering cloud. *Elsa* recoils at the thought—this first seed of suspicion—but she soon smiles assuredly and sings to *Ortrud* a lovely song about "the faith and trust that knows no doubt." Wagner's words are as beautiful as his music, and in this composition they seem to mount upward on the "wings of song" like the spontaneous utterance of a pure heart. *Elsa* puts her arms gently about *Ortrud* and leads her into the palace. *Frederick,* who has kept in the background, watches them disappear, and the scene closes with his final descant on revenge.

After his exit the orchestra has a solo, so to speak,

while the stage is occupied in representing the dawn of day. Villagers stroll in one by one, garlands are hung in honor of the wedding, and the scene becomes constantly brighter and more active. The herald appears above the gates of the palace and makes three announcements in the name of the King: First, that *Frederick of Telramund* is banned and shall be befriended by no one; second, that the Heaven-favored stranger shall hereafter be called the guardian of Brabant; and, third, that this hero shall lead them soon to "victorious war." Then follows a chorus about the Heaven-sent guardian of Brabant, after which there is a momentary commotion caused by *Frederick,* who, in spite of the ban against him, comes forward and asserts that he will defy their much-lauded hero and will open their eyes to his duplicity.

But this incident is forgotten in the gorgeous scene which now commences. The wedding-guests come slowly from the palace, and wend their way in stately procession toward the church. Their course is accompanied by a march of pontifical solemnity, which attains its grandest beauty when *Elsa* comes down the great stairway clad in robes of regal splendor. All voices join in praise for "Elsa of Brabant."

The procession proceeds to the church; the music increases in strength, when suddenly there is a discord. *Elsa* is confronted at the church entrance by *Ortrud,* who fiercely declares she will no longer follow like an attendant; that she is the one to whom people should bow instead of *Elsa,* whose future lord comes of a land and family which he dare not tell! *Elsa* is dumbfounded by this sudden onslaught from the woman she has befriended. But *Ortrud* maintains her position, and actually defies *Elsa* to ask the hero his name. This attack is

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EAMES AS "ELSA" IN "LOHENGRIN"

diverted by the ceremonious entrance of the King and *Lohengrin,* to whom *Elsa* hastens with her grievance. *Ortrud* is promptly ordered aside, and the procession resumes its march. But again the solemn cathedral music crashes into a discord. *Frederick,* the despised one, dares to rush before the King and bar the way as he begs them to harken to his words. There is great indignation over the interruption, but *Frederick* so intensely cries for justice that at last even the King listens as he charges *Lohengrin* with sorcery. He sustains the charge by demanding *Lohengrin* to tell his name, if he be an honest man; if he can not do this there must be some dark secret to hide. All turn to the hero expectantly, but he only defends himself by saying that he has proven his worth in mortal combat, according to ancient usage, and that he will not answer *Frederick* nor even the King —only *Elsa* shall be answered this question. He turns to her and finds her trembling with agitation. The orchestra tells us her thoughts, for we hear the *Ortrud*-theme and dark motif writhing in and out like venomous serpents. A murmuring sort of chorus about the strange secret which the hero so zealously guards is gradually resolved into a song of allegiance and belief. The King declares *Frederick* unworthy of consideration. But during the jubilant chorus which follows, that Miserable steals up to *Elsa* and casts his final poison-shaft. He tells her that if *Lohengrin* were once wounded, "merely pricked in the finger," he would then bestow upon her full confidence and never leave. *Frederick* further says he will "linger near the coming night," and when she calls will enter and commit the deed without harm to *Lohengrin. Elsa* spurns the tempter away, and *Lohengrin,* who perceives him at her side, bids him forever

begone. But finding *Elsa* even more agitated than before, he asks in the presence of all if she wishes to be told his name. She remembers her vow, and in tones of exultation declares that love is greater than doubt. The magnificent march music is again resumed, and they enter the minster without further incident, excepting the defiant gaze of *Ortrud* as *Elsa* passes; and while the curtain descends we hear again, half hidden in the orchestra, the terrible dark motif.

There is a brilliant orchestral introduction to the third act, which represents the marriage fête. Its tempo and rhythm are positively gay, tho this is an adjective seldom appropriate to Wagner. But the hilarity has subsided by the time the curtain rises: the trumpets and cymbals are hushed, and the gentlest of music greets our ears as we look upon the bridal chamber. The voices are at first distant, but gradually approach, and the effect of their song steals over us like a potent charm. It is the wedding-march—the "Lohengrin Wedding-March"! We all know the power of that music. There are some compositions which become absorbed by the world like important inventions or discoveries. People require certain musical forms of expression as they do artificial light, and we pity those who did without this "Wedding-March," or Chopin's "Funeral March," or the Schubert "Serenade," as we pity our ancestors who made shift with tallow candles instead of incandescent lamps. The charm of the "Wedding-March" is not diminished because we know it so well. With Wagner as with Beethoven, every hearing reveals new beauties. When the chorus at last leaves *Elsa* and *Lohengrin* alone, we echo his first words: "The sweet song now is ended."

But our regrets are quickly appeased by the delicious

love-duet which follows. It is a scene of rapt delight—of happiness too great to last. Not in vain did we have the dark motif jangled in our ears when the curtain last descended; it meant trouble in the coming act, as we soon perceive. *Elsa* wishes she knew his name—just to speak it lovingly as he does hers. Then *Lohengrin* points to the open window through which the moonlight streams upon them, and he sings of the perfumed air which they enjoy without questioning its cause or source; thus, he says, should they love. The exquisite melody of this song seems to exhale from his heart like fragrance from a flower. It is redolent of tenderest love.

The nobility and beauty of *Lohengrin's* character so impress themselves, that *Elsa* feels oppressed with her own unworthiness. She wishes she might do something heroic to prove her love. For instance, if he would confide to her his secret, she would guard it so faithfully that death itself could not wrest it from her! Very sweetly and beautifully does she coax for this token of trust on his part. *Lohengrin* replies most gently that he has trusted her already by believing that she would keep her vow. Then he says she little knows how much she is to him; that no earthly honor—not the King's kingdom—could replace what he has left. Only *Elsa,* his bride, can recompense the sacrifice; for not from night and grief does he come, but from a home of joy and pride.

Like a flash does this remind *Elsa* of *Ortrud's* prophecy that he may leave her. The *Ortrud*-theme swoops down upon the orchestra and settles there like an ill-omened bird. The director's baton may send it away for a moment, but down it comes again, and the dark motif with it. Poor *Elsa* becomes almost frenzied. She

believes *Lohengrin* will long for his beautiful home, which even now he can not forget. She sees in her mind's eye the swan-boat approaching to take him away. *Lohengrin* speaks reassuringly; but the spell is upon her, and nothing—nothing can give her peace but to know the truth. With mounting tones, the last one of which is like an outcry, she asks the fatal question. *Lohengrin* gives an exclamation of grief.

At this moment the door is burst open by *Frederick,* who with drawn sword has come to wound the hero, or, more probably, to kill him. *Elsa* at once recognizes his intention, and frantically bids *Lohengrin* defend himself. With a single thrust he kills his would-be assassin.

This intense and tragic climax is followed by a lull. *Elsa* has fallen half-swooning on the couch, and *Lohengrin* stands sorrowfully to one side. He at last exclaims slowly and sadly: "Now is our sweet joy fled"; and then we hear in the orchestra, faint and beautiful as a memory, that recent love-duet. It is only a fragment, a fleeting thought, but so touching and pathetic that we could weep with *Lohengrin* for the harmony that is gone.

The last act is short and almost entirely taken up by *Lohengrin's* story and farewell. The scenery is the same as in the first act, and the entire chorus of noblemen and soldiers again assemble before the King. They have not yet heard of the tragic event which ended the last act, and are therefore surprized when a bier is carried in and placed solemnly before them. It bears the body of *Frederick.* They are still more surprized when *Elsa* enters, pale and dejected, and then their hero, who appears equally sad. But surprize reaches its climax when they hear him announce that he can not be their leader.

Lohengrin wastes no words. After the first assertion

he informs them of *Frederick's* death; whereupon all voices declare his fate to be most just, and the body is removed. *Lohengrin* then announces that *Elsa,* his wife, has broken the vow which they all heard her make, and he has come before them to answer her question and dispel the mad suspicion which a wily tempter inplanted in her heart. They shall all learn his name and heritage, and may then judge whether he was worthy of their trust. The people wonder with awe-hushed voices what revelation is in store, and then there floats in the orchestra the soft tremolo of the swan-music, as *Lohengrin* tells them of a distant land called Montsalvat, where is a radiant temple. And in this temple is guarded a sacred vessel which possesses wonder-powers. A dove descends from heaven once every year to renew its marvelous strength. This treasure-blessing is called the "Grail," and to its chosen votaries a matchless power is given. These knights of the Grail are sent abroad as champions of innocence and truth, and they may tarry so long as their name is unknown. But the Grail's blessing is too pure and holy to be regarded by common eyes, and if disclosed its champion must leave at once. *Lohengrin* adds that this penalty now falls on him, for he is a knight of the Grail: his father, great Parsifal, wears its crown, and "I am Lohengrin."

As in the first prelude and swan-song, the harmonies of this last great recital seem not of earth but from another sphere; they linger and abide with us like a beautiful blessing. This silver-clad knight of the Grail has been singing of a hallowed mystery whose purity and spirituality are revealed more in the music than by the words. After bidding farewell to the hapless *Elsa,* from whom he must part in spite of her piteous appeals,

there comes gliding upon the river the swan-boat. He sings a sad welcome to the swan, and then announces to *Elsa* that could he have remained one year, through the mercy of the Grail, her brother would have returned. He hands her his sword and horn and ring to give this brother if ever he comes back. The sword and horn will impart strength and victory, and the ring shall remind him of "Lohengrin who loved Elsa and was her champion."

A jarring interruption is now created by *Ortrud,* who cries out with reckless triumph that the swan who serves *Lohengrin* is the bewitched brother, and that *Elsa* has herself to thank for causing the hero's departure, which forever prevents the young Duke's return. On hearing this mocking invection from the sorceress, *Lohengrin* clasps his hands in a fervent prayer, which is at once answered. A dove descends from heaven and touches the swan, which is immediately changed into the young heir. He rushes forward to embrace his sister, while *Lohengrin* steps into the boat, which is drawn away by the dove. It floats silently down the beautiful river, and the hero stands sorrowfully leaning upon his silver shield. This is our last glimpse of *Lohengrin,* the Knight of the Grail.

CHAPTER XXIII

"AÏDA"

AS IN "Carmen" every measure scintillates with the sunshine of Spain, so in "Aïda" every phrase seems shadowed by the mysteries of Egypt. A comparative study of these two operas will forcibly impress one with the power of music to express nationality. "Aïda" carries one to a distant land and centuries back; but this power of breathing the musical life of ancient Egypt into the still form of a libretto is the culmination of modern art. Guiseppe Verdi, the greatest modern Italian composer, had written twenty-six operas before he wrote "Aïda."

A tender, wistful strain high up in the violins forms the opening of the prelude. With this first faint phrase the composer seems to awaken from her long sleep the muse of Egyptian music. Like the hero of fairy lore, Verdi, the prince of melody, has penetrated a realm of slumbering harmonies. They are at first subdued, dazed, and bewildered with themes mingled and woven together like exquisite cobwebs. The conductor's wand gently disperses these clinging meshes of sound, the curtain is lifted, and we are ushered into the musical life of an ancient civilization.

We see a hall in the palace at Memphis, and *Ramfis,* the high priest, converses with *Rhadames,* a distinguished soldier. They talk of the impending war against Ethiopia, and it is intimated that *Rhadames* may be chosen to lead the Egyptians. But the words and song are of little

interest compared to the orchestral accompaniment. This is somber and subdued; the notes are of equal length, and the intervals seem of geometric exactitude like the diagram of an astrologer.

Ramfis goes out leaving *Rhadames* joyous over the prospect of becoming a general. He thinks of his beloved *Aïda,* to whom he will return laden with laurels. "Celeste Aïda!" is the title of this great romanza. Like all love-songs it is legato, andante, and pianissimo, but at the same time noticeably original and characteristic. The harmonies are constructed with rigid grandeur, but softened and beautified by a tender melody that rests upon them like moonlight on the pyramids. While he is lost in thoughts of *Aïda,* the *Princess Amneris* enters. She inquires the cause of his radiant expression, and insinuatingly wonders if it is some dream of love. *Rhadames* only replies that he has hopes of martial honors, and is therefore happy. The *Princess* secretly loves *Rhadames,* and her questions are based on jealousy, which is revealed in the nervous, agitated theme that accompanies this duet. Her suspicions are further aroused by the entrance of *Aïda.* As the heroine approaches we hear again the pensive theme that opened the prelude. It takes on a new and greater meaning, for *Aïda* is a captive slave, an exile, and the music reminds us of some great longing that vainly strives to express itself. This effect is due to the fact that the musical cadence is left unresolved.

Aïda must have the dark complexion of the Ethiopian, and very few prima donnas look well under coffee-colored cosmetic; but Madame Nordica's appearance did not suffer from the application. This *Aïda* is beautiful, and *Rhadames* can scarce conceal the joy of her presence. The captive also looks down to hide her emotion. But

Amneris has detected every glance, and again that jealous theme sweeps like a flame over the orchestra.

The *Princess* addresses her slave by sisterly names, and asks the cause of her downcast looks. *Aïda* says she grieves because of the war against her native land. There follows a trio wherein *Amneris* fosters her jealousy, while *Aïda* and *Rhadames* tremble lest their secret be discovered.

Sounds of martial music prelude the entrance of the king and his suite. When they are assembled a messenger comes forward to announce that the Ethiopians are marching toward Egypt's capital under the leadership of their king, *Amonasro*. Upon hearing this name *Aïda* exclaims to herself, "My father!" and we thereby learn that she is a princess, but has concealed the fact from her captors. The Egyptians impulsively shout "To war!" and *Rhadames* is proclaimed their leader. They sing a war-hymn which is so inspiring that even *Aïda* joins in this prayer for victory to *Rhadames*. After a grand climax all go out excepting the heroine.

"Return victorious!" She repeats this last sweeping phrase, and shudders at the words, for success to *Rhadames* implies defeat to her father. This distressing thought agitates the music like the passing of a great ship over tranquil waters. The ensuing melody rises and falls like waves in the wake of a vessel. *Aïda* realizes that she can not pray for either lover or father. "Was there ever a heart so oppressed!" Her song is like a wail, and the accompaniment introduces a pagan use of the monotone that gives startling effects. "Pieta, pieta!" are the final words of *Aïda's* great solo.

She goes off, and the scene changes to an interior view of the temple of Vulcan. It is a brilliant setting, with

solid columns and golden statues, mysterious colored lights and fuming incense, priests and priestesses in glittering costumes; but the music of this consecration-scene reveals more barbaric splendor than the surroundings. The first sounds are the full, pulsating chords of a harp, and from an inner sanctum the grand priestess sings with rich soprano tones a weird refrain that is weighted with mystery. The priests in front answer in subdued, awe-hushed voices. Three times the wondrous song and answer are repeated, after which the priestesses perform a sacred dance around the altar. The music of this dreamy dance has the most astonishing progressions, but at the same time maintains an imposing solemnity. During the dance *Rhadames* is led to the altar, where a silver veil is placed over his head. *Ramfis,* the high priest, charges him with the welfare of the Egyptian army; and then follows a splendid prayer that *Ramfis* starts like a sacred fire. It reaches *Rhadames,* who sings in a higher key, and then it spreads and fills the great temple; bassos, tenors, soloists, and chorus take it up in turn and form one mighty rondo. Like a response from heaven comes the chant of the grand priestess from within. Her inspired refrain with its harp accompaniment alternates with the exalted prayer in front. This consecration-scene has little to do with the plot of the story, but it contains some of Verdi's finest music.

Several months are supposed to elapse before the second act, which opens with a scene in the apartment of *Amneris.* Maids are robing the Princess for a festive occasion, and we learn by their chorus that *Rhadames* will to-day return from victorious war. This scene is monopolized by the stringed instruments and female voices. A tropical indolence characterizes the choruses,

with their abundant harp accompaniment. *Amneris* ever and anon breaks forth with an expansive theme expressing her unconquered love for *Rhadames.* To divert their mistress a group of Moorish slaves perform a lively, grotesque dance, for which Verdi has written music of intoxicating witchery. It is crisp as the snapping of fingers and uncivilized as the beating of bamboo reeds—a veritable savage revel that is nevertheless graceful and delicate. The chorus resume their dreamy praise of the hero, and *Amneris* continues her moody thoughts of love.

Like an electric flash from a sultry sky does the entrance of *Aïda* affect the musical atmosphere. At sight of the beautiful captive, *Amneris* again rages with jealousy, as is plainly indicated by the conflicting themes in the orchestra. With subtle devices the Princess seeks to entrap her rival. She pretends a deep sympathy for *Aïda's* grief over the vanquished Ethiopians, and adds that "Egypt also has cause to mourn, for our brave leader, *Rhadames,* is among the slain." This treacherous falsehood is foisted so suddenly that *Aïda* loses caution and reveals her emotion. *Amneris* cries out in fury: "Tremble, slave! thy secret is discovered!" She informs *Aïda* that *Rhadames* lives, and that she, Pharaoh's daughter, loves the hero and "will not brook the rivalry of a slave!" *Amneris* threatens death as the punishment for such audacious love. The proud captive stands for a moment in defiance; but realizing the futility of such action, she humbly pleads for pardon. In this song the composer admirably simulates a savage dearth of compass and harmony—an effect of crude simplicity that is charming and touching. The scene is interrupted by a song of victory from the streets, a signal for the festivi-

ties to begin. After commanding the Ethiopian to follow as a menial in the celebration, *Amneris* goes out. *Aïda* closes the scene with the same prayer to Heaven "Pieta!" that ended the first act.

A noisy march introduces the next scene, which represents a grand avenue in Egypt's capital. At the back of the stage is a triumphal arch and at one side a throne. The greater part of this act is spectacular, and after an opening chorus the orchestra has for some time entire charge of the music. The march from "Aïda" is almost as popular as the Faust March. Its harmonies never swerve from the Egyptian type, being always stately and substantial as their architecture.

While the brass instruments are playing with full force, we witness the ceremonial entrance of the court, with innumerable priests and soldiers, trumpeters, fan-bearers standard-bearers, train-bearers, white slaves, black slaves, flower-girls, and dancing-girls. There follows an elaborate ballet divertissement, clothed in music of gay pattern and gaudy design, but light in substance. Five lines of continuous staccatos, like so many strings of beads, form the opening of this dance music. The salient points that impart an unmistakable Egyptian atmosphere to this composition are as follows: A savage repetition of every musical phrase, a wild predilection for the monotone, a limited variety of keys, and a preponderant accenting of the rhythm.

After the dance more soldiers enter, some more slaves, more banners, chariots, and sacred images. A chorus of welcome to the conquering hero is struck up, and it increases in strength and grandeur with the pageantry on the stage. It is not merely the crescendo, but the glorious swing and rhythm of the melody that so inspires

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NORDICA AS "AÏDA"

enthusiasm. When at last *Rhadames* is borne in on a golden palanquin, the climax is stupendous. With a final "Gloria!" shouted by every voice the hero comes forward to be embraced by the King. A group of Ethiopian prisoners are led forward, and *Aïda* with a cry of joy recognizes her father. He has disguised himself as a common soldier, and does not wish it known that he is the defeated king *Amonasro*. Every one is interested in this reunion of *Aïda* with her father, and the Princess *Amneris* secretly rejoices to have them both in her power. *Amonasro* makes a noble plea for mercy, and his words are set to music that "droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven." It is like a tone-translation of Shakespeare's ode to the quality of mercy. *Aïda* and the other captives lend their voices to the entreaty. *Rhadames,* who has been observing *Aïda,* but dare not address her, is moved by his love to ask for the prisoner's release. The King feels bound to grant the hero's request, but finally decides to retain *Aïda* and her father as hostages of peace. As a final honor the King presents his daughter to *Rhadames,* and adds that by her side he shall some day reign over Egypt. The act closes with another grand ensemble. *Amneris* gloats over her rival's subjection, *Rhadames* longs for *Aïda* but dare not oppose the King, and the heroine bemoans her fate. The priests, people, soldiers, and prisoners praise the King, the trumpets blare forth the "Aïda March," and the curtain descends.

Act III is the most beautiful both scenically and dramatically. It pictures the banks of the Nile at night. An illuminated temple is at one side, and we see the silvery river winding its way amid palms and rushes far into the distance. Not only is the landscape

bathed in "softened light," but also the music imparts an unmistakable effect of moonlight. A faint violin pizzicato that vibrates but never changes position is maintained throughout the introduction, while the other instruments call up weird sounds of the night—the palm-trees rustling together and the plaintive cry of some river-bird—then all is still: only that fluttering moon-beam holds the senses.

The silence is broken by a solemn chant from within the temple, and one soprano voice soars out alone in an incantation, mysterious and imposing as an oracle. A royal barge glides to the river's bank, and *Amneris* with her maids and the high-priest *Ramfis* betake themselves to the temple, where the Princess offers prayers for her coming marriage. The sphinx-like song of the grand priestess is again heard, and then every sound is hushed excepting the dreamy pizzicato movement in the violins that so resembles the flitting of moonbeams.

Ere long the solitary tones of the *Aïda*-theme arise from the stillness like a spirit of night. Never before have we realized the full beauty of this melody, for amid the blare and brightness of other harmonies it has been obscured like a sensitive flower. But here in the solitude and darkness it unfolds itself like some glorious night bloom. With cautious steps the heroine enters. *Rhadames* has told her to meet him, and *Aïda* wonders what greeting he will have for her. If it is but to say farewell, then "Nilus, the mighty river, shall quiet forever the exile's grief." For the present she plunges into a flood of memory about her native land, a stream of words that gently flow through a forest of beautiful harmonies. It is a song of homesickness that soothes tho it saddens.

While still under the spell of this music *Aïda* is startled by the entrance of her father. He also sings of their distant home, but with an underlying purpose. He says they may yet return; that it is in her power to save Ethiopia, to regain her throne, her love, and to vanquish her rival *Amneris*. The father has been quick to detect the love between *Aïda* and *Rhadames*. *Amonasro* announces that his people are prepared to renew their attack and that success is assured if they can learn by what path the Egyptians will march. He wishes his daughter to win, by fair means or false, this secret from *Rhadames*. *Aïda* at first refuses to act this part of treachery, whereupon *Amonasro* chills her with his curse. He says she is no longer his daughter, "No longer princess of Ethiopia, but a slave of the Pharaohs!" The proud blood of the captive is aroused by this epithet. She entreats her father to recall his words, for " 'Patria mia' ('my country') is more to me than my love. I will obey." The accompaniment presents an unvaried monotone in the treble, while beneath it there is a pathetic melody half hidden by the upper octaves like romance suppressed by duty. *Amonasro* conceals himself behind palm-trees as *Rhadames* approaches.

Never has the joy of meeting been more admirably expressed in music than in *Rhadames's* greeting of *Aïda*. It is a flight of song as spontaneous and free as the flight of a released bird. He tells her that he will not marry the Princess, but must start at once on a second war; and if this time victorious he will tell the King of his love and will claim *Aïda* as the reward of his valor. It is a brave plan, but she quickly discovers the weak point. The nervous, inflammatory theme of jealousy that accompanied *Amneris* in the first act again arises

like a hot breath from the orchestra. *Aïda* well knows that the Princess would wreak vengeance "like the lightning of heaven." There is only one course that will unite the lovers, and this is to fly—"Fugire!"—to fair Ethiopia, *Aïda's* native land. She coaxes and entreats in phrases of delirious, dream-like beauty descriptive of that wondrous land—"There where the virgin forests rise 'mid fragrance softly stealing." A halcyon peace pervades the music, and its harmonies are strange and rare like the perfume of some exotic flower. *Rhadames* demurs, but the power of her song is irresistible, and he soon consents to leave Egypt for her sake. There is nothing half-way about his decision when once made. The orchestra music rises in emphatic, resolute crescendos that are gloriously inspiring, and the singer's voice is carried forward like a rider on his steed. The music recurs to the first impulsive theme of greeting. It is given in full chords, and the soprano joins with the tenor. Every note is accented and the crescendos are augmented. Both voices and orchestra mount upward and soar away on one final, sustained note.

As the lovers start to go, *Aïda* asks, "By what route do the Egyptians march? We must avoid them in our flight." *Rhadames* names the path, whereupon *Amonasro* steps forward announcing that "the king of Ethiopia" has overheard this important secret. He promises royal honors to *Rhadames;* but the hero is overwhelmed with the realization that he has betrayed his country. Vengeance falls upon him at once, for *Amneris* and the high priest have also overheard. They come from the temple and denounce *Rhadames* as a traitor. He is seized, but *Amonasro* and *Aïda* escape.

The first scene of the fourth act reveals a hall in the

palace. At the back is a large portal leading to the subterranean court of justice. *Amneris* holds the stage alone during the greater part of this scene. The orchestra preludes it with the familiar theme of jealousy that indicates the ensuing action as clearly as the title to a chapter. *Rhadames* is to-day awaiting judgment, and the Princess, as a last resort, offers to secure his pardon if he will promise to forget *Aïda.* The hero firmly refuses the proffered love of *Amneris.* He believes *Aïda* is dead and prefers to die also. Very grandly does the music depict *Amneris's* outraged feelings. She flings a fusillade of wrathful tones, every one bearing the sting of sharp accent. But when he is gone her pride and jealousy wilt under the warmth of genuine love. She sees him led to his doom in the underground courts and hears the priests and judges chanting his name as traitor. This scene resembles the "Miserere" in "Il Trovatore." Three times the unseen chorus is followed by the soprano in front, who sings an anguished phrase that starts with a high note and ends with a palpitating, gasping decrescendo that is almost identical with the music of "Leonore." The priests condemn *Rhadames* to be buried alive. As they again pass through the hall, *Amneris* pleads and implores for mercy, but it is now too late. No power can save the hero.

The last scene of the opera is very short, but it is the most important. It represents two floors, the upper one being a splendid and brilliant temple interior, while beneath it is the crypt—gloomy and terrible. This is the tomb of *Rhadames,* who has just been immured. The priests above are placing the final stone as the curtain rises and the hero is seen below reclining on the steps. He is thinking of *Aïda* while resignedly awaiting his

slow and awful death. Suddenly a voice calls him, and *Aïda* herself appears to his wondering gaze. She had heard of his fate, and to prove her love has secretly returned and hidden in this tomb to die with him. The following song of the lovers has been humorously referred to as the "starvation duet." The fact of this appellation only reveals how celebrated is the composition. It is more generally known as "the duet from 'Aïda.'" There are other duets in the opera, but when another is meant it is designated; this is the *great* one. Its pathetic harmonies are mingled with the solemn chant of the grand priestess in the temple above and the music of a sacred dance. *Aïda* becomes delirious, and sees in her dreams the gates of heaven opening. Indeed, the music is exquisite enough to make any one dream of heaven. With soft, sweet tones and bated breath *Aïda* sings till she dies.

Instead of closing with a crescendo, as do most operas, the final of "Aïda" becomes ever softer and fainter, like a departing spirit. The brass and wood instruments have long since retired, only the violins and harp keep up a gentle vibrating accompaniment like the flutter of cherubs' wings. The curtain descends very slowly, and the last notes of the violin are written doubly pianissimo. The muse of Egyptian music glides away as silently as she came.

CHAPTER XXIV

"THE HUGUENOTS"

IT IS not surprizing that the massacre of St. Bartholomew should have attracted such a composer as Giacomo Meyerbeer. The terrible scene immediately suggests a blaze of orchestral chords, seething strings, and shrieking brass, a style in which Meyerbeer delighted. He secured the collaboration of the celebrated French dramatist, Eugene Scribe, who apparently went to work at this libretto by writing the fourth act first and then forcing the preceding situations to fit together as best they would. The result is not wholly satisfactory; but where the plot is vague the music is clear and strong enough to carry our emotions over chasms of inconsistencies.

The great theme of the opera is the Huguenot hymn, a thrilling song of faith, with firm, bold harmonies that express unswerving belief. This hymn is used in the overture with grand effect. It is sustained and upheld clear and strong amid the murmurings and attacks of surrounding variations until it finally bursts forth in untrammeled splendor like the supremacy of religious faith.

The curtain rises upon a banquet-hall in the mansion of *Count de Nevers,* who is a gay young nobleman of Touraine, the province of France, in which the first two acts occur. *De Nevers* is giving a supper to his comrades, and the first chorus is the celebrated drinking-song, a refrain so abounding in good cheer that it predisposes one in favor of the whole opera. The revelers are all Romanists, with the exception of *Raoul de Nangis,* a

young Huguenot, who because of recent promotion in the army has been included among the guests. *De Nevers* proposes a toast to "our sweethearts," and gaily adds that he must soon forego such frivolities as he is to be married. Some one suggests that they all recount their love affairs, and *Raoul* is requested to begin. He relates an adventure wherein he rescued a beautiful lady from the rude insults of some boisterous students. He has not seen her since and knows not her name, but she dwells—in his heart. His glowing description of the heroine is a verbal portrait framed in music of golden beauty. It is the best tenor solo of the opera.

After this love-story some surprize is caused by the entrance of *Marcel,* a Huguenot soldier, who is *Raoul's* faithful attendant and has followed his young master to this banquet merely to be near and watch over him. *Marcel* much disapproves of this "feasting in the camp of the Philistines," as he terms it, and by way of atonement he sings in a loud voice that fervid hymn which the Huguenots always clarion forth when in danger. *Raoul* begs his friends to excuse the rough soldier, and they promptly attest their good will by inviting *Marcel* to drink. He declines the wine, but consents to sing for them. His song has a wild refrain like the firing of musketry, "Piff-paff-piff," and it is a celebrated bass aria.

When this whizzing composition is ended a servant informs the host that a strange visitor would like to speak with him privately. *De Nevers* at first refuses to see any one; but on learning that it is a veiled lady he changes his mind and goes out, after laughingly announcing that he is thus constantly sought by handsome women. During his absence the others joke about the incognita and handle her reputation lightly. They look through a

window and see her conversing with *De Nevers* in his private apartment. At sight of her face *Raoul* recoils, for this clandestine visitor is none other than the heroine of his romance—the beauty to whom he had lost his heart. His ideal is shattered by the discovery. When *De Nevers* returns the audience learns from an aside remark that the lady was his prospective bride, *Valentine de St. Bris,* and that she came to beg release from her promise. He has reluctantly complied, but does not inform his guests of the matter. At this moment a richly attired young page from the palace presents himself. It is *Urban,* the contralto rôle, who, after bowing gracefully on all sides sings a charming and celebrated aria, "Nobil donna,"—"a noble lady sends by me a missive to one of these gentlemen." Such is the substance of this exquisite song with its chivalrous melody, surrounded by rococo embellishments that seem as appropriate to the pretty page as are his Louis Quinze slippers and point-lace ruffs. The note is addressed to *Raoul,* a fact that occasions some surprize. The young Huguenot reads aloud what sounds like a practical joke, for the paper tells that a court carriage is in waiting to convey him blindfolded to an unnamed destination. His companions urge him to go, for they have recognized the seal as belonging to Queen Margaret of Touraine; but *Raoul* does not know this. He, however, accepts their advice, and allows himself to be blindfolded in spite of protests from *Marcel.* They sing a bewitching ensemble that is finally resolved into the familiar drinking-song. With these rollicking measures *Raoul* is led away by the page and the curtain descends.

The opening of the second act is like a musical mirage —tone-fantasies suspended in the air. We see before us the luxuriant palace gardens where *Margaret,* queen of

Touraine, is surrounded by her maids of honor. Terraces and fountains, jeweled hands and feathered fans, vibrant harps and caroling flute combine to form an effect of elegant repose. *Margaret* is the rôle for colorature soprano, in contradistinction to the heroine, *Valentine,* which is for dramatic soprano. The music of the queen is very beautiful and so difficult that it requires a great artist, altho there is but the one important scene. It is considered by some to be Madame Melba's best rôle.

Her first aria is about "this fair land," and we incidentally learn that she deplores the existing dissension between Catholics and Huguenots, the one blot upon the perfect peace of Touraine. Her court ladies presently sing an idyllic refrain, and *Margaret* joins in their song; but while the others abide by the simple melody she decks it out with colorature spangles quite befitting a queen. After another florid solo the favorite maid of honor, *Valentine de St. Bris,* enters. She wears a riding costume and has just returned from her venturesome interview with *De Nevers,* who, as she joyfully announces, has released all claim to her hand. We soon learn that *Valentine,* the unknown heroine of *Raoul's* romantic adventure, became as infatuated with her rescuer as he with her—but she, it seems knows his name. At any rate we learn that she has confided in the *Queen* and that her gracious Majesty is already planning to marry the two: a plan that greatly appeals to her because it will unite the two leading families of Catholics and Huguenots. The *Queen* rather delights in playing the good fairy, and for this reason has summoned *Raoul* in the mysterious fashion witnessed in the first act. Before he arrives there is another chorus, called the "song of the bathers," which is sung by a group of the *Queen's* ladies

at the back of the garden near a restful pool o'ershadowed by tall trees. A harp accompaniment like rustling leaves plays around the melody, which is of eolian sweetness, until suddenly, like a fitful breeze, there comes an elfish measure all in the treble. After a brief disporting of this air-sprite we hear again the soft eolian harmonies, which rise and fall until lulled into silence.

The page *Urban* now enters and announces that a stranger is approaching, and the maids of honor gather around as he tells of this young cavalier who comes with blindfolded eyes and knows not his destination. *Urban's* song is brimming over with mischievous coquetry. Its opening words are simply, "No, no, no, no, no, no, you never heard so strange a tale." The court ladies are all in a flutter of curiosity when *Raoul* is led in, and they would like to see the outcome of this adventure; but the *Queen* orders them away.

Now follows a scene that is full of quaint themes and ingenious duets, a musical branch with many blossoms. *Raoul* is permitted to remove the bandage from his eyes. He looks with wonder upon the beautiful scene, and then addresses elegant phrases of adoration to the fair lady before him. She is not devoid of coquetry—this Queen of Touraine—and for some moments there is a graceful game between the two in which the shuttlecock of love is tossed upon the battledores of music. But it is only a game, and the toy is presently dropped. *Urban* enters to announce that some noblemen of Touraine have come to attend the *Queen*. *Raoul* is amazed to learn the lady's identity, and *Margaret* hastens to inform him that in order to unite the Huguenots and Catholics of her province, she has arranged a marriage between him and the daughter of *St. Bris*. *Raoul* bows obedience to her wish.

The Catholics and Protestants enter in stately procession and group themselves on either side of the stage, *Raoul* and *Marcel* heading the Huguenots, while *St. Bris* and *De Nevers* represent the opposite side. *Margaret* welcomes them in musical phrases that are right royal. She informs *St. Bris* and *De Nevers* that the King of France requests their immediate presence in Paris, and she then makes her own request, which is that Huguenots and Catholics shall lay aside all enmity and sanction the marriage that she has arranged. They sing a splendid refrain calling upon heaven to witness their vow of future fellowship. This scene contains some fine climaxes, and several brilliant cadenzas for the *Queen.* *Margaret* sends for *Valentine,* and expects *Raoul* to be thrilled with delight when he recognizes the heroine of his romance. But as *Valentine* comes forward, *Raoul* gives an exclamation of indignant surprize, for he thinks some great insult is implied in asking him to marry this woman who secretly visits *De Nevers* and who has been the subject of jests. Without explanation he firmly refuses to accept her for his bride. The consternation hereby aroused is admirably expressed in the music. The first measures are hushed, as tho the chorus were dumbfounded; but they soon gain their voices and denounce *Raoul* in ringing tones. *Valentine* exclaims, "What have I done to earn such disgrace?" and the theme is taken up in grand form by the others. Every now and then we catch the firm tones of *Marcel* who amid all this dissension is singing his Huguenot hymn. *St. Bris* draws his sword, but the *Queen* forbids a duel in her presence, and reminds him that he must go at once to Paris. *Rauol* declares he will follow and is ready to fight *St. Bris* at any time.

The action and music increase in strength until the curtain falls.

Act III pictures an open square in Paris, the Pré-aux-Clercs, which extends back to the river. There are two taverns and a church in the foreground, and the stage is filled with a mingled crowd. After an opening chorus of promenaders some Huguenot soldiers come forward and sing a march that is equally stirring and much resembles our own "Rally 'round the flag." It is, however, more elaborate, and has a surprizing effect in which the upper voices sing a steady accompaniment of "derum-de-dum-dum," while words and melody are in the bass. There follows a sharp contrast in the song of some Catholic maidens on their way to church. Purity and simplicity are expressed by the slender accompaniment of flute and clarionet. The people kneel as they hear this "Ave Maria," but *Marcel,* who has just entered, refuses to do so. The Catholics are angered, while the Huguenots side with *Marcel.* There is a vigorous ensemble in which the "Ave Maria" and soldiers' chorus are admirably combined, and through it all are heard the disputing cries of the two factions. A general scuffle would ensue were it not for a sudden diversion in the form of some brightly clad gypsies who enter and solicit trade in fortune-telling. Their song is as gay as their costume, and they wind up with a fantastic dance. The orchestra music is here more deserving of attention than the stage picture. The principal melody has the quaint conceit of reiterating one note through five beats, and then with a quick turn reeling on to the next, like a dancer poising on one foot until forced to whirl upon the other.

After this divertissement, *St. Bris,* his friend *Maurevert,* and *De Nevers* come out of the church where they

have left *Valentine,* who, we now learn, is after all to marry *De Nevers,* and this is their wedding-day. The bridegroom goes to bring his retinue to escort the bride home, and *St. Bris* felicitates himself for bringing about this union which wipes out the disgrace of *Raoul's* refusal. His remarks are interrupted by *Marcel,* who delivers a letter from his master which designates this Pré-aux-Clercs as meeting-place and an "hour after sundown" the time for their deferred duel. *Maurevert* suggests to *St. Bris* that the Huguenot deserves more punishment than can be meted out in honorable combat, and the two friends retire in consultation.

The stage is darkened and we hear the curfew bell, while a watchman goes through the street chanting a drowsy refrain that tells all good people to close their doors and retire. *Maurevert* and *St. Bris* again cross the stage, and we glean from their few words that a plot is brewing for *Raoul's* destruction. But *Valentine* has been standing at the church door and overheard their talk. She is much alarmed, and wishes to warn *Raoul,* but knows of no way until suddenly she hears and recognizes the voice of *Marcel.* She calls to him, and he asks: "Who calls in the night? Explain at once or I will fire!" *Valentine* quickly thinks to speak the potent name "Raoul." Meyerbeer has very aptly used for this call the interval of the perfect fifth, which is known as the cry of nature, because it is the most natural interval to fall upon when calling in the open air. The milkmaid calling her cows or the huckster vending his wares will most often be found singing the perfect fifth.

On hearing the name of his master *Marcel* is satisfied and comes forward to investigate, but *Valentine's* face is concealed by her bridal veil. She tells him that his

master should be well armed and have strong friends near in the coming duel, else he will fall the victim of a plot. *Valentine* starts to go, but *Marcel* detains her with the question, "Who art thou?" She hesitates and then answers, "A woman who loves *Raoul.*" In a highly dramatic aria, whose phrases are like storm-tossed billows on a restless deep-sea accompaniment, she confesses that in saving the one she loves she has "betrayed her own father." The two voices finally work together as is the fashion of duets, and end up with a flourishing climax. At this point occurs a famous high *C,* which the harmony requires to be brilliantly sustained and crescendoed throughout four measures. It is a *tour de force* which always brings down the house. *Valentine* now reenters the church as the principals and seconds of the duel approach. *Marcel* tries to warn his master, but *Raoul* will not listen to suspicions, for he believes his opponent to be honorable. There follows a splendid septet, in which *Raoul* sings the leading refrain, buoyant with youthful courage. The ensemble is occasionally interspersed with the religious tones of *Marcel,* who prays Heaven to interfere. A grand, swinging theme in which all the voices move together like a great pendulum, is the final of this septet.

The duel begins, but *Marcel*, who is on the alert, hears approaching footsteps and draws his sword. *Maurevert* enters and cries out as prearranged: "A duel with unfair numbers! More Huguenots than Catholics! Help!" whereupon his followers rush in and surround *Raoul.* But at this moment the Huguenot soldiers who are merry-making in the tavern commence singing their jolly "de-rum-de-dum-dum," whereupon *Marcel* rushes to the door and sings in thunderous tones the Protestant hymn, which

the soldiers within at once recognize as a signal of danger. They hurry out, and then follows a lively commotion on all sides. But there are more words than blows, and the excitement is presently quelled by the ceremonious entrance of *Queen Margaret* who has just arrived in Paris. She is much displeased to come upon party dissension. *St. Bris* blames *Raoul,* while the Huguenot charges *St. Bris* with treachery. At this moment *Valentine* comes from the church, and *Marcel* relates how she warned him of a plot. There is general amazement on hearing this. *Raoul* now thinks to make some inquiries about this lady he had so unhesitatingly condemned, and learns how terrible was his mistake. *St. Bris* enjoys telling him that she is the bride of *De Nevers,* and we hear the approaching music of the nuptial barge. An illuminated flotilla appears at the back of the stage, and *De Nevers* steps upon the bank. He addresses to *Valentine* some gallant phrases of welcome, and escorts her to the boat as his splendid retinue sing a joyous wedding-march. The curtain falls upon a whirl of gay music.

Scribe is on terra firma in the fourth act, which is really the nucleus of the plot, and is perhaps the most dramatic love-scene of any Grand Opera. The curtain rises upon an apartment in the house of *De Nevers,* and *Valentine* is alone. The opening orchestral measures seem oppressed with a tuneful despair that is soon explained by her song, wherein she bewails this forced marriage, for her heart still cherishes *Raoul.* The hero suddenly appears at her door, and *Valentine* thinks she is dreaming until *Raoul* announces that he has come "like a criminal in the night, risking all" for the sake of seeing her and craving forgiveness. They hear approaching footsteps, and *Valentine* prevails upon him to enter a side

room just as her father and husband come in at the main door with a company of Catholic noblemen. They are too interested in themselves to note *Valentine's* agitation, and she, being a Catholic, is allowed to remain while her father unfolds the awful plan sanctioned by Catherine de Medicis to "wipe the Huguenots from the face of the earth." The great theme of this conjuration-scene, "blessed is revenge, obey the good cause," is softly sung by *St. Bris* and then taken up by the others in broad harmonies that swell out and sweep forward like a mighty torrent. When the tone-waves are again tranquil *St. Bris* bids his friends swear allegiance to the royal decree, and all comply with the exception of *De Nevers,* who declares he can not join in such murder. There is graceful nobility in his music and fervor in his words.

The details of the plot are sung by *St. Bris* in hushed, hurried tones: how "to-night when strikes the bell of St. Germain," the Catholics shall rush upon the unsuspecting Huguenots. He then admits into the room a group of monks, who tie white scarfs upon the conspirators and bless their uplifted swords. The music of this scene is grandly sustained by the orchestra, but the ensemble is difficult and requires much rehearsing, for it abounds in surprizing fortes and pianisimos.

When the conspirators are gone, *Raoul* starts from his hiding-place toward the door, but *Valentine* intercepts him. He wishes to fight for his friends or die with them, but she begs him to stay. There follows a thrilling duet in which the voices pursue each other with growing intensity. The tempo is rapid, and the phrases short and breathless. The first minor melody is soft, but throbbing with suppressed emotion like the strange light and peculiar hush preceding a tempest. Then the music rushes

into the major, where it reels and sways like an anchored ship that soon must break its moorings. The soprano voice rises upon *G, A. B* flat, *B* natural, and finally *C,* where all bonds seem loosed and the music rebounds in a rapid descending chromatic run. Then comes a furious passage in which the orchestra conductor uses his baton like a Roman charioteer lashing his steeds. *Valentine* places herself before the door, and in a desperate moment she declares, "Thou must not go, for, Raoul—I love thee!" This confession is followed by a transporting duet that brings oblivion to other memories. Its mellifluous melody is written pianissimo, dolce, legato, amoroso, and the orchestra carries it one measure behind the voice, thus keeping the theme constantly in the air like a sweet incense.

A bell in the distance suddenly scatters all lingering harmonies. It is the bell of St. Germain, and *Raoul* is aroused to reality. He sings a dramatic refrain about duty and honor, but *Valentine* still entreats him to stay. Her song is simple as a lullaby but powerful in effect, and he is distracted between her pleadings and the cries from the street. Flinging open the window, he shows her the terrible scene of massacre. A lurid light falls upon them, and there is murder in the orchestral music. *Valentine* swoons. *Raoul* looks with anguish upon her prostrate form and we hear the struggle he endures. The melody of *Valentine's* last sweet song predominates for a moment in the orchestra, but then the noise of the massacre is resumed. *Raoul* hesitates no longer. One farewell glance, and he rushes with drawn sword through the open window to the street.

Unlike many operas in which the fourth act is the greatest, the finale of "The Huguenots" is of sustained

intensity and not an anti-climax. This fifth act is often omitted, however, as it makes the opera very long. The scene represents a street at night—men, women, and children cross the stage and take refuge in a church. *Raoul* and *Marcel* chance to met, and they are soon surprized by the entrance of *Valentine,* who has recklessly followed the hero. She wears the white scarf which betokens Catholicism and has brought one for *Raoul,* but he refuses this mode of escape. Valentine then flings her own emblem away and declares she will join his faith. The music of this entire act is most thrilling. We hear the women in church singing as a last prayer that grand Huguenot hymn and in the distance a chorus of murderers as they make their awful progress through the streets. This massacre music is blood-curdling; its steady, muffled tread sounds like marching over a paving of dead bodies The waiting figures in the foreground again hold our attention. *Marcel* relates how he witnessed the death of *De Nevers,* and on learning that *Valentine* is free, these lovers kneel before the Huguenot soldier, who blesses their union. The choral in the church is again heard, and those outside join in its splendid harmonies. *Valentine* sings with the fervor of her new-found faith, "Hosanna, from on high the clarion sounds!" This last trio resembles the finale of "Faust" in that the theme rises higher and higher, like a flaming fire, to be quenched at last by Death. The murder-chorus is heard approaching, and soon a group of massacrers enter. "Who is there?" they ask.

"Huguenot!" replies the hero, and in ringing tones a woman's voice cries out, "Huguenot!" "Fire!" orders *St. Bris,* who thereby kills his own daughter.

CHAPTER XXV

AN HOUR WITH LILLI LEHMANN

IN BERLIN a score or more of years ago, the foreigner was at once impressed with two faces, new to him, but conspicuous in every show-window. One picture represented an imposing, middle-aged man, which you were told was "unser Kronprinz," and the other, a handsome, fine-figured woman, was "unsere Lilli Lehmann." And you were looked at in surprize for not knowing "our Lilli Lehmann."

The Berliners have always spoken in a possessive sense of this lady—their star of the opera—especially in that year when she broke her contract with the Kaiser to accept an engagement in America. It made a great talk there at the time, but the Berliners thought none the less of her, and the morning after her début in New York the first words that greeted you in the Vaterland were:

"Have you heard the news? The Lilli Lehmann has had a great success in America."

Twelve years later this same Lilli Lehmann was still having "a great success in America." Her art is enduring as it is great. She is equally successful in colorature and dramatic rôles; but her physique and voice are particularly fitted to the mythical Wagnerian characters. Lilli Lehmann imparts to these legends of the Norseland all the attributes our fancy calls for. Her Scandinavian goddess is a creature of mighty emotions, heroic build, and a voice at times like the fierce north wind. Her cry of the Walküre is a revelation in the art of tone-production.

Lilli Lehmann

I was to call upon Madame Lehmann at 9:30 A. M., and this after a great and long performance the evening before. I had visions of the prima donna still in bed, receiving her caller *en negligée,* and sipping her coffee, served by a French maid, while a parrot and pet dog and flowers and the morning mail and newspapers combined to form an effect of artistic confusion.

This makes a pleasing picture, but it is not Lilli Lehmann. There was no sense of "artistic confusion" about her, from her gray-tinged hair to her grand, true voice.

In answer to the visitor's knock at her room in the Hotel Netherlands, she opened the door herself, and shook hands with true German cordiality.

The bed in the adjoining room was already made, and there was no sign of a late breakfast; all this at an hour when it is safe to say half her hearers of the evening before were not yet up.

And Lilli Lehmann, who in the eyes of the public is majestically arrayed in flowing robes and breastplates and silver shields, wore on this occasion, over her plain serge dress, the typical little fancy apron—so dear to the German *Hausfrau.*

The Berliners may well call her "Our Lilli Lehmann," for she is as unassuming to this day as the least of them.

But altho she impresses one as unpretentious, one also feels at once her great force and energy. It shows in her every word and movement, and also in her business-like method of being interviewed.

"Yes, I am quite tired," was her first remark as she seated herself at a little writing-desk and her visitor near by. "The opera lasted so late; I did not get to bed until two o'clock. But I was waiting for you this morning,

and had just prepared to write down some items you might wish to know."

Then she took a pencil and paper—and what do you suppose she wrote first? These are the exact words, and she read them aloud as she wrote:

"Born—Würzburg, November 24, 1848."

I could not conceal some surprize, and was obliged to explain: "The American ladies so seldom give their age that your frankness is a revelation."

"The Lilli Lehmann" smiled and said: "Why not? One is thereby no younger."

She turned again to the desk, and went on with the "interview," using her pencil with great firmness and rapidity as she wrote in German, and with all possible abbreviations:

"I was brought up in Prague, where I made my début when eighteen years of age. My mother was my first teacher and constant companion. She was herself a dramatic soprano, well known as Maria Löw, and my father, too, was a singer."

"In what opera did you first appear?"

"It was the 'Magic Flute,' and I appeared in one of the lighter rôles; but two weeks later, during the performance, the dramatic soprano was taken ill, and I then and there went on with her rôle, trusting to my memory after hearing it so often. My mother, who was in the audience and knew I had never studied the part, nearly fainted when she saw me come on the stage as *Pamina.*"

Madame Lehmann's feats of memory have more than once created a sensation. We remember the astonishment once aroused in New York music circles when she mastered the Italian text of "Lucretia Borgia" in three days.

Recurring to her life in Prague, Madame Lehmann further said:

"I appeared not only in many operas, but also as an actress in many plays. In those days opera singers were expected to be as proficient in the dramatic side of their art as the musical, and we were called upon to perform in all the great tragedies. But nowadays this would be impossible, since the operatic repertoire has become so tremendous."

People seldom consider how much larger is the present list of famous operas than formerly. All the Wagnerian works, many of Verdi's, and most of the French have taken their places in comparatively recent years, and yet there is still a demand for all the old operas too. The singer who attains Wagner must at the same time keep up her Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Bellini.

As the visitor mentioned Bellini, Madame Lehmann assented. "Yes, we are to give 'Norma' next month." "Norma," abounding in melody and florid fancies, is as different from Wagner as a cloudless sky from a thunder-storm.

The divine art, like nature, has its various moods, and Wagner and Bellini represent two extremes.

Among Wagner's works, "Isolde" is one character to which Madame Lehmann's temperament and physique are strikingly fitted. Throughout the long first act, wherein she is almost constantly singing, she imparts a glorious impression of one who *thinks in music*. The fearless, impassioned *Isolde* thinks bitter, rancorous thoughts of *Tristan*, whom she abhors, until with fierce resolve she hands him the fatal drink which, unknown to herself, is a love-potion. The previous dearth of action

has created a ready mood for us to thrill and respond at the love-frenzy, the delirium which now animates the scene as these unwitting lovers suddenly find all hatred and other memories gone from their hearts.

It may be mentioned here that Wagner firmly believed in the power of contrast, and he purposely preceded his greatest climaxes by what many would deem an unwonted length of inaction.

In 1870 Lilli Lehmann was engaged for the Berlin Opera-House.

Americans can hardly appreciate the significance of this fact; but it means much. The opera in Berlin is supported by the government and was formerly directly under the supervision of the emperor. The singers are not engaged for a season, but for life, being entitled to an annuity after they retire from the stage.

When asked if the old Emperor Wilhelm was musical, Madame Lehmann smiled, and there was a gleam of humor in her eyes:

"No, I can not truthfully say that he was at all musical, tho he was wonderfully kind and good to all artists."

For fifteen years Lilli Lehmann sang in Berlin with an occasional flight to Baireuth, under the kaiser's permission, where she sang for Wagner himself.

"I was one of the Rhine daughters, and also the first Forest Bird in 'Siegfried.'"

Wagner's own Forest Bird! It is a thrilling and poetic statement that would be hard to equal. Of all this great master's characters, including gods and demi-gods, knights and shepherds, dwarfs and giants, his most original, and perhaps for this reason his best-loved children of the brain, were, we believe, his Rhine daughters and his Forest Bird. The former sing under the water

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LEHMANN AS "ISOLDE" IN "TRISTAN AND ISOLDE"

laughing strains of mystical import and unearthly sweetness, while the Forest Bird sings in the air—always unseen, but more impressive than the greatest presence.

This bird-music is not very long, but it is of unsurpassed beauty, and the most memorable theme in the opera. The scene, too, is exceptional and powerful in its simplicity—only one person on the stage. *Siegfried,* the inspired youth, who knows the speech of bird and beast, is alone in the forest when he hears a bird sing. He pauses to listen, as you in the audience do too, for the song is not a meaningless mocking-bird array of trills and cadences, but a tender strain that bespeaks the bird as a prophet. *Siegfried* tries to catch the message, tries to see the bird, and tries, too, to imitate its tones. He cuts him a reed from the water-banks, and shapes it and tests it until he can play upon it the music he hears. Ah, we should like to have been in that audience at Baireuth when this Forest Bird took its first flight into the world!

It is a great thing to create a rôle, to set the standard by which all later performances shall be modeled. If the new opera proves to be a great and lasting work, the singers who created the important rôles are always credited therewith and mentioned. They usually have been selected by the composer, and their performance is the result of his best instruction as well as their own inspiration. Madame Lehmann has "created" many rôles, but the most poetic, we deem, is the Forest Bird.

After writing with characteristic abbreviation the foregoing fact—" '75-'76, Baireuth, Rhine daughter, I Forest Bird"—Madame Lehmann handed over the paper and asked, "Is there anything more I can tell you?"

Her bright eyes, clear complexion, and magnificent figure prompted a personal question:

"How do you keep your splendid health, and the strength to work so much?"

For this she had a ready answer:

"I have been a vegetarian for the past five years."

In reply to one more parting question, Lilli Lehmann spoke words of wisdom that are worthy of reflection:

"Yes, I still practise and study more than ever. At the end one is just beginning."

CHAPTER XXVI

"THE FLYING DUTCHMAN"

"THE FLYING DUTCHMAN" is one of the most melodious of Wagner's operas, and also one of the most popular in Germany. Its soprano rôle is well beloved by all Wagnerian singers, but for some reason the work is seldom given in this country. Americans have never had an opportunity to hear Madame Lehmann in this opera, but it is one in which she is well known abroad.

"Der Fliegende Holländer" is an early offspring of Wagner's genius, and was composed at a time when Fate frowned upon him, and poverty and despair were his close companions. After six weeks of feverish labor, alone in hostile Paris, Wagner presented his beloved score to the orchestra of the "Conservatoire." They promptly condemned it, which affords a notable example of the change in musical taste. Portions of the "Flying Dutchman" now hold a permanent place on French programs.

The plot, as well as the music, is as usual Wagner's own. "A daring captain, after frequent vain attempts to double the Cape of Storms, swears a mighty oath to persevere throughout eternity. The devil takes him at his word, and the hapless mariner is doomed to roam the seas forever." Such is the legend of the "Flying Dutchman," to which Wagner has added one redeeming clause: once in seven years the wanderer may land in search of a faithful wife. If she be true unto death, the curse shall be lifted.

Wagner's music is so powerful and absolutely appropriate that it seems to suggest the text, instead of conforming to it. No ordinary tunes or conventional harmonies could adequately depict the roaming, restless, Satan-chased sailor. The overture opens with the curse-theme, which seems like the fantom ship itself as we follow its course throughout the introduction. It rides over and under and around hurricanes of chromatics and tremolos. Chords sweep like a deluge over the luckless theme. But as neither rocks nor tempest can annihilate the accursed vessel, so this theme mounts ever uppermost. On and on, *"Ohne Rast, ohne Ruh,"* must sail the *Flying Dutchman.* But the wanderer in his dark existence finds hope in the Salvation-theme, a peaceful, religious phrase that is poised like a single star amid the tumultuous elements. Like all of Wagner's overtures, this one has become a favorite program piece.

With the ascending curtain there arises from the orchestra a storm of restless tremolos and shrieking scales. The wind and waves thus sounded in the music are also depicted on the stage. An expanse of ocean occupies most of the scene, only in front the turbulent waves beat against a black Norwegian coast. Driven thither by the elements, a ship casts anchor at the shore. *Daland,* the captain, steps on land, while his crew noisily pull up sails and cast out cables. As they work they shout in unison a rude refrain that lends rhythm to their movements, "Yo-ho-ho! Ho-he!" This is accompanied by surging waves of sound from the orchestra. Owing to the sudden storm, this ship has been carried seven miles away from the home port, to which it was returning after a long voyage. There is nothing to do but wait for a south wind to carry them back. *Daland* goes on board

again and orders the sailors to rest. He also retires, after entrusting the watch to his *Boatswain.*

Altho this *Boatswain* has no name, he is no insignificant character, for to him falls one of the loveliest songs of the opera. He has a tenor voice, and is in love with a "blue-eyed mädel." He makes a tour of the deck, and then seats himself by the rudder. The storm has abated, but we occasionally hear a gust of chromatics and a splash of chords. To ward off sleep, the boatswain sings of his sweetheart, and calls upon the south wind to blow their good ship home. This music is delightful and refreshing as a salt sea breeze. The sailor does not trouble himself with any fixed standard of tempo. He sings like the fitful wind, one moment "accelerando," and the next "una poco moderato." He sustains the climaxes and indulges in sentimental "rubatos," all of which is a touch of naturalness skilfully introduced by the composer. The *Boatswain* makes another tour of the deck and then renews his song; but there is this time more languor in his tones. The phrases are separated by frequent "rests," the "moderatos" have developed into "largos"; the "rubatos" are exaggerated, and finally this sweet-voiced *Boatswain* falls asleep.

Soon the clouds become black and lowering, the waves are white and towering, and the orchestra is like a seething cauldron of sound. The conductor stirs it up more and more, until he brings to the top that awful curse-theme of the *Flying Dutchman.* We lift our eyes to the stage, and lo! over the dark waters comes another ship, strange and uncanny in appearance, for its sails are blood-red and they hang upon masts that are black as night. With a mighty crash this wanderer of the seas sinks anchor alongside the Norwegian vessel. The dreaming

Boatswain is aroused for a moment. He hums a snatch of his love-song, and then once again nods his head in slumber. A terrifying silence falls upon the music as we watch the ghostly crew of the fantom vessel noiselessly furl those crimson sails.

There is a pause, and then, soft but impressive, that remarkable curse-motif announces the approach of the *Holländer* himself. He steps upon shore after another seven years of wandering. His stalwart figure is draped in a black mantle, he wears a full beard, and has a baritone voice.

The first solo of the *Holländer* is most interesting; but those who expect a pleasing tune with a one-two-three accompaniment will be disappointed. One is apt to think that music must be always beautiful to be admired, but Wagner has taught that this idea is erroneous. Music should represent what the maker feels, just as painting does what he sees; and in proportion to the correctness of his representation is the work to be admired. As a prominent example of this fact in painting, mention may be made of Munkacsy's picture of Judas, which all admire but none call beautiful. And so this solo of the accursed mariner is not beautiful, as that term goes. How could it be? The weary, dreary, condemned *Dutchman,* communing with himself, does not think of graceful melodies that delight the senses. His phrases, instead, are all angular, bitter, heavy, and despairing. He tells of his longing for rest, and he mocks at the hope of finding true love. Too often has he been deceived: "I wait and watch for the Judgment Day. Then only shall I rest!"

The *Holländer* leans mournfully against a rock, and the music subsides, until a light-hearted melody directs our attention to the Norwegian ship. *Daland* has come

upon deck, and is surprized to find another ship alongside. He calls the *Boatswain,* who, half awake, commences to hum his love-song; but another call from the captain brings him to his feet. They hasten to signal the strange ship, but receive no answer; whereupon *Daland,* seeing the *Holländer,* steps upon shore to accost him.

Politely but unconcernedly the hero makes answer to all questions, and learns, in turn, that *Daland's* home is but seven miles' sail from here. The *Hollander* asks for a night's lodging, and offers to pay liberally. He brings forth a casket of jewels, which he declares is but a sample of the cargo he carries. With bitter tones he adds: "What joy are such riches to me? I have no home, no wife, no child; all my wealth should be yours if you could give me these." He astonishes *Daland* with the sudden question, "Have you a daughter?" and on being answered in the affirmative the *Holländer* proposes to wed her. Very nobly does this strange suitor plead his cause, his longing for love and rest. The music is here truly beautiful, for the hero is striving to win and please.

Captured by the prospect of wealth and also by the strange fascination of the *Holländer, Daland* consents to the proposition. Once again the sad seaman is tempted to hope. The music has become decisive and, because of rapid tempo, sounds quite joyous. On top of this pleasing climax there comes a happy cry from the Norwegian ship: "A south wind! south wind!" The sailors sing their "Yo-ho-ho" chorus as they let down sails and pull up anchor. *Daland* goes on board, and the *Holländer* promises to follow. With a breezy accompaniment of wind instruments the two ships sail away and the curtain descends.

The prelude to the second act carries us from the storm-beaten coast of Norway to the domestic peace of *Daland's* home. The composition is like a brisk sail over smooth harmonies. It opens with the *Boatswain's* song of the south wind, and after a succession of undulating passages finally lands upon the celebrated spinning-chorus.

A capacious room in the Captain's home is filled with a merry company of maidens, who, with their spinning-wheels, are working together under the watchful eyes of *Frau Mary*. The wheels whir and whiz, like a drone of bees, the orchestra keeps up a continuous revolving accompaniment, and even the melody, with its ingenious rhythm, simulates a whirling wheel. The picture is as pleasing as the music; both are unique and delightful. The girls spin industriously where the song goes fast, but unconsciously hold up with the ritardandos, and *Frau Mary* has frequent occasion to remonstrate.

Only *Senta,* the Captain's daughter, does not join in the song. She is sitting in a big armchair and dreamily regards a large picture that is hanging over the hearth. It is an ideal portrait of the *Flying Dutchman,* such as many seafaring folk possess. *Senta* is an imaginative girl, and has always been fascinated by the "pale man" on the wall and his story. She begs *Frau Mary* to sing the ballad of the *Flying Dutchman.* This request being refused, *Senta* sings it herself. Truly wonderful is this ballad, with its blustering accompaniment and shivering climaxes. The final verse relates how every seven years the weary seaman lands in search of a faithful wife, but never yet has he found one. "False love! false faith! Forever and ever must he ride the seas!"

Senta has become so wrought up by the song that she

now sinks back in her chair from exhaustion, while the other girls sing with bated breath that beautiful melody of the salvation-theme. "And will he never find her?" they ask with childlike credulity. *Senta* suddenly springs from her chair and sings out with exultant tones: "I am the one who could save him! I would be true till death! May heaven's angels send him to me!" This music is of boundless intensity; the strongly accented accompaniment sweeps forward and recedes like angry breakers, while the voice part soars above like a fearless sea-bird. "Senta! Senta! Heaven help us, she has lost her reason!" exclaim the astonished maidens, and *Frau Mary* utters maledictions upon that "miserable picture," threatening to throw it out of the house.

At this moment *Erik*, the young hunter who loves *Senta,* hastily enters, announcing that her father's ship is landing. The dreamy heroine promptly revives at this news, and becomes as elated and excited as any of the girls. They all want to rush out and see the ship, but *Frau Mary* orders them back, directing them, instead, to the kitchen, where there is work to be done on account of this sudden home-coming. With much chattering and commotion the girls and *Frau Mary* go out, leaving *Senta* and *Erik* alone.

He detains her to listen to his vows and fears. Very tender and earnest is this song of love and doubt. Wagner knew well how to use the simple melody, which he considered essential to some emotions but out of place with others. Like the artist's fine brush, it will not do for painting storm-clouds, but in scenes of delicate delineation it is used with good effect. *Erik* is troubled about a dream he had the night before. To the usual dream accompaniment of violin tremolos, he relates how he

saw *Senta's* father bring with him a stranger who looked like that picture on the wall. Already we hear far away beneath the tremolos, soft but distinct, the curse-theme of the *Flying Dutchman.* As the dream-song goes on this ominous phrase comes nearer, step by step, always in a higher key, always louder and more impressive. It represents, in fact, the actual approach of the *Holländer, Senta* listens as though entranced while *Erik* tells how he saw her come forward and kneel at the stranger's feet. But the "pale man" lifted her in his arms and carried her away over the sea. To *Erik's* horror, *Senta* turns toward the picture and cries out: "He is seeking me! I would save him!" The young hunter sadly goes away, believing that she is out of her mind.

Senta continues gazing at the picture. The music has become soft and slow, and the curse-theme pervades the air like a ghostly presence. But the heroine sings to herself that beautiful salvation-motif. The phrase is finished with a startled shriek, for the door has opened, and there before the astonished girl stands her hero—"der Fliegende Holländer!" *Daland,* her father, is also there, but *Senta* has neither sight nor thought of him. She stands immobile and amazed, her eyes never turning from the *Holländer.* When *Daland* comes nearer, she grasps his hand, whispering, "Who is that stranger?"

The father has carefully prepared his answer, and it is the finest bass solo of the opera. After telling *Senta* that the stranger has come to be her bridegroom, he turns to the *Holländer,* asking, "Did I exaggerate her loveliness? Is she not an ornament to her sex?" In this phrase the listener is surprized with a genuine *ad libitum* colorature passage, a style of musical decoration in which Wagner seldom indulges. But in the original text this

bit of fioritura falls upon the word *zieret* ("ornament"), and thus is a striking example of Wagner's theory that music must fit the words. *Daland* sings on for some time, until he notices that neither *Senta* nor the *Holländer* accord him any attention. They are still gazing at each other, and the father very wisely goes out.

The leading theme of his aria slowly departs from the orchestra, and then, softly and hesitatingly, the curse-theme and salvation-motif enter side by side. They move around a little, as tho to make themselves at home, and then begins the great duet between soprano and barytone.

The *Holländer* recognizes in *Senta* the angel of his dreams, and she finds his voice greeting her like familiar music. A beautiful melody is borne upon the orchestra like a boat on the breast of a stream. As the graceful structure floats past, the soprano and then the barytone enter upon it. They glide on together, over smooth places, upon tremulous undercurrents, but finally touch upon the salvation-theme, which, throughout the opera, is typical of the seaman's haven. It often arises above stormy passages like a mirage of the longed-for harbor.

After this vocal excursion the *Holländer* asks *Senta* if she is willing to abide by her father's choice and to vow eternal faith. Her consent is glad and free. There is another ensemble introducing a new and stirring joy-theme. The highest note always occurs upon the word faith, thus fulfilling the substance of the text, which is, "Faith above all!"

Daland reenters and is delighted to find such unity of voice and purpose. He wishes the engagement announced at the evening fête which his sailors will have to celebrate their home-coming. *Senta* repeats her vow to be faithful unto death, and the act closes with an exhilarating trio.

Wagner makes his orchestral preludes conform to a distinct purpose—that of connecting the acts. So with the next introduction we hear the joyous theme of the recent duet gradually modulated into a whispering memory of the *Boatswain's* song. This, in turn, develops into a new and noisy nautical refrain that is continued till the curtain rises and then is sung by the Norwegian sailors who are on the deck of their ship. They are merry-making. The ship is illuminated with gay lanterns, as are also the tavern and houses in the foreground. But not so the stranger's vessel that lies alongside at the back of the stage. It is engulfed in gloom and silence like the grave. The gay Norwegian chorus has a peculiar rhythm that suggests the flapping of sail-cloth in a brisk wind; it has sharp, rugged accents and a spirited tempo. The song is ended with a regular hornpipe dance on deck. This bewitching dance-melody seems thrown in to show what Wagner could do in that line if he wanted to.

Some maidens come from the tavern with a basketful of provisions. While the sailors continue dancing to the gay orchestral accompaniment, the girls sing among themselves in quite another strain. As their conversation should be most prominent, the dance-melody is promptly changed from major to minor, which always gives a subduing and receding effect like "scumbling over" in painting.

The girls go toward the *Holländer's* ship, intending their provisions for the strangers, who seem to be sleeping profoundly. The girls call to them, but only a ghostly silence rewards their efforts. They sing a winning waltz phrase inviting the strangers to join their fête; they offer every inducement to arouse the silent crew, and finally

resort to a great outcry: "Seamen! Seamen; wake up!" But again only prolonged stillness is the answer.

The well-meaning maidens are thoroughly frightened, and they hasten away after handing their basket to the Norwegian sailors. These proceed to enjoy the contents. They fill their wine-glasses and repeat the merry opening chorus.

In the meantime the sea surrounding the *Holländer's* ship becomes suddenly turbulent, a weird blue light illumines the vessel, and its crew, which were before invisible, are seen to move about.

The Norwegians cease singing, while their ghostly neighbors begin to chant in hollow tones that terrible curse-theme. Tremolos and chromatics descend upon the orchestra like a storm of hail and rain that almost drown the singers' voices. To a demoniacal refrain full of startling crescendos and pauses they sing of their gloomy captain

"Who has gone upon land to win a maiden's hand."

Then they laugh an unearthly "Ha! ha!"

The Norwegian sailors have listened at first with wonder and then with horror. Like children afraid in the dark, they decide to sing as loud as they can. So their gay sailors' chorus rings out above the steady curse-theme of the *Hollander's* crew. The Norwegians urge each other to sing louder. Three times they start their song in a higher key, but that fearful refrain from the fantom ship overcomes every other sound. The Norwegians are too terrified to continue. They cross themselves and hurry below deck. The sign of the cross arouses another mocking laugh from the crew of the *"Flying Dutchman."* Then suddenly silence falls upon them. The blue flame disappears and darkness hangs

over all, while in the orchestra there is a long-sustained note, and then one soft minor chord like the shutting of a door upon the recent musical scene.

The succeeding harmonies are of another character, as distinct as a new stage-setting. A phrase that well simulates hurried footsteps accompanies the hasty entrance of *Senta* and *Erik* who is much agitated. He has just heard of her engagement to the stranger, and can scarcely believe it. He upbraids and pleads in one breath, while *Senta* begs him to desist. But the despairing *Erik* kneels before her and sings with grief-stricken tones of their past love. Like all of *Erik's* music, this cavatine is simple and sincere, as one would expect from a peasant lad.

While he is kneeling before her the *Holländer* comes upon the scene unobserved. With tones as furious as the orchestra accompaniment he cries out: "Lost! My happiness is lost! Senta, farewell!" He summons his crew to haul up anchor and let down sails. "False love! false faith! I must wander the seas forever!"

A tempestuous trio follows the *Holländer's* outcry. *Senta* reiterates her vow, and with intense fervor declares he must not leave her. Maidens and sailors rush to the scene, but all stand back in amazement as they hear the stranger announce: "You know me not, else had you ne'er received me. My ship is the terror of all good people. I am called The Flying Dutchman!" With this word he springs upon board; the crimson sails expand upon the black masts, and the ship leaves shore; while the ghostly crew chant their blood-curdling "Yo-ho-ho!"

But this is our last hearing of the curse-theme. *Senta* has rushed upon a high rock projecting into the sea. With full voice and soaring tones she calls to the receding

ship: "My vow was true! I am faithful unto death!"—whereupon she throws herself into the waves.

No sooner has she done so than the fantom vessel sinks from sight. The music also tumbles down a tremendous chromatic, then it mounts again, changing from minor to major, which gives an effect of sudden peace. The *Holländer* has found true love. He rescues *Senta* and we see him clasping her in his arms, while the chords of the salvation-theme rise above the other harmonies like the spires of a beautiful city. The haven has been reached at last.

CHAPTER XXVII

MARCELLA SEMBRICH—THE STAR OF STARS

EARLY in the season of 1898-99 there was a performance of "Traviata" in the Metropolitan Opera House which might be described as "an occasion of superlatives"—including the largest auditorium, the biggest audience, the finest singers.

Grand Opera in itself is a culmination and combination of the greatest efforts of the greatest minds. There is, in the first place, the plot of the libretto, which in the case of "Traviata" was the masterpiece of Dumas, France's greatest dramatist—a man who labored all his life as tho achievement required only work, and who yet possessed such mental power as no amount of work could achieve.

After Dumas comes the librettist who transposed the story into suitable Italian verse to be set to music. And then we have the work, the inmost thoughts, of Giuseppe Verdi, Italy's greatest modern composer. There was a day when each of these sparkling melodies that now delight the whole world was born in the soul of Verdi, and heard by him alone. But he patiently put upon paper every note that his years of study and his gifted soul impelled.

The work of the composer, the dramatist, and the librettist belongs to the past, however, and that audience of five thousand people did not bestow much thought on them. Nor did they think very often of the orchestra, composed of fifty thorough musicians, who really worked more during the performance than any of the other participants.

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MARCELLA SEMBRICH

It may be mentioned here that in all Grand Operas the orchestra plays continually; it is the wall upon which the picture is hung. There may be pauses in the singing, but the conductor's baton never rests.

People seldom appreciate the vast knowledge of music and the remarkable ability in sight-reading which these orchestra players possess. Not one of them but has worked at his art from childhood; most of them play several different instruments; and they all hold as a creed that a false note is a sin, and a variation in rhythm is a fall from grace. The director is their temporary deity who commands the orchestra beneath and the stage above —a little universe of music. He holds all together and dictates the tempo, the expression, and the phrasing. His commands are for the time being immutable as the laws of nature, for any serious disobedience would cause the whole structure to fall to pieces.

The five thousand listeners gave some applause to the director after the playing of the introduction, and they gave a little more to the chorus—those earnest workers who serve Grand Opera as the stokers do a ship. Then the tenor received a good deal of applause—his reward for training his voice, studying music, memorizing operas, overcoming nervousness, and singing in public twenty years.

But the great applause, the "bravos," the cheering, the excitement, were reserved for the star, the soprano—Marcella Sembrich! It is always impressive to witness such a success. It is inspiring to know that one woman can so stir the hearts of the people.

Madame Sembrich's voice is as perfect a voice as the world has ever heard. Yet her greatness consists more in her art than in her voice. She has not been satisfied

merely to use her gift as nature gave it, but she has acquired a mastery of tone-coloring; an art that can impart to every tone a meaning of its own, and can express thereby all the quick-flashing subtleties of emotion. In the last act of "Traviata" the quality of her tones, always beautiful, but ever varying as her art dictates, conveys to the listener surely and truly the approach of death and the hope of heaven. This is great art indeed. No wonder the audience fairly gasps as the last sweet tone leaves the lips of the pale Violetta and soars away into infinite space.

It was the day after "Traviata," when, in response to a knock at Madame Sembrich's door in the Hotel Savoy, a mellow voice said, "Come in."

On my obeying this summons, the singer was "discovered"—as the librettos have it—standing near her grand piano, alone, and as unostentatious as your own sister.

There was no effect of the impressive prima donna, all flowers and frills and *frou-frou*. She was quite alone, just as lesser mortals sometimes are; and she furthermore spared her visitor from any sense of interrupted work, or great haste, or the magnitude of the occasion.

She was just a courteous, quiet lady who seated herself beside the visitor and talked earnestly about music and work.

When asked how early she began to study the art seriously, she replied: "When I was six years old. My father taught me the piano until I was ten. He was a very gifted man. Then I also studied for a while with Dr. Stengel, who is now my husband, and with Epstein in Vienna."

On learning that her visitor was acquainted with

Vienna, Madame Sembrich's face lit up (she has a radiant smile): "Ach! then you speak German?" And from this point she talked altogether in German, which is more akin to her native Polish.

She is fluent, however, in all the continental languages. "We have to know them all, for we need them constantly," she explained. In reply to other questions, the singer told enthusiastically of her early work.

"I can not say I was ever discouraged, for I so enjoyed my art that it was always of absorbing interest; but my whole life has been made up of hard work, always work. I also studied the violin and composition, and I used to rise early and go to bed late, for I worked many hours a day."

Madame Sembrich is one of the most thorough, all round musicians the lyric stage has ever known. She is not only a singer, but has played successfully in public on the piano and violin. Her rare gift of voice was not discovered until she was seventeen. Then her great knowledge of music enabled her quickly to develop the voice, and it was not long before she appeared in opera and made her first great success in London. When asked if she was ever nervous, the answer came promptly:

"Oh, yes, very nervous! *Now* I am always nervous. But in the early days it was not so bad. When you are young and have a beautiful voice, you think it is all that is necessary, and are not nervous, because you do not realize the depth and extent of art. But as you grow older you appreciate the possibilities of art—you know what it implies, and how perfect you wish to make it; and then you are nervous. It is more nervous work, too, for such artists as Madame Patti, Madame Melba, or myself, who travel about and sing first in one place

and then in another, because each time we have to win our audience and make a new conquest. In Europe, at the great opera-houses such as are in Vienna or Berlin, it is different, for there the singers are engaged permanently. The public knows how well they can do, and if sometimes they art not at their best, they know the public will excuse them. I find I am more nervous, too, as my reputation increases, for more is expected of me."

Referring again to her studies, Madame Sembrich counted over thirty-seven full operas that she has learned. It is well to consider for a moment what this implies. Aside from the native gifts of voice, musical talent, and dramatic temperament, there must be years of practise in singing and acting; then the words of each opera must be memorized, sometimes in three languages. After studying, originating, and mastering the action, the music must be learned, and every word wedded to a certain tone, and every tone to a certain beat of time. Herein the actress has but a slight task compared to the opera-singer, for in the drama it matters not if a word comes a moment sooner or later; but in Grand Opera a second's deviation might cause a discord.

Madame Sembrich delights in the opera "Traviata" because of its intense action.

"But I like, too, the lighter operas. The merriment of 'Rosina' amuses me as I act it."

One more question was asked as her visitor arose to go.

"Is it true, Madame Sembrich, that you walk two hours every day?"

"Yes," she answered good-humoredly. "I had just returned to-day when you came. I started at eleven and got home at one."

Regular and rigorous in her daily life even yet! Upon

meeting Madame Sembrich, one receives an impression of graciousness and greatness not to be forgotten.

And in the year 1924 we find Madame Sembrich still regnant: a star still luminous—a guiding star—with satellites inumerable.

Madame Sembrich has retired from the operatic stage, but only to emerge in new glory. As the Abbé Liszt in his later years held sway over all who sought to conquer the heights and declivities of the keyboard, so Madame Sembrich to-day rules in the world of song. She holds supreme authority—hers is the last word—on the immortal art of the singer.

In old Weimar it was that the great Liszt—imperious as a crowned king—received the elect of the musical world. But Madame Sembrich it is who now wields the sceptre. She holds court in a *château-royal*—nothing less—on the banks of our own Lake George.

She has here a thoughtful outlook upon life: all about her, bordering the lake, are brooding mountains forever poised on their deep reflections in the waters below. The entrance-drive to her door compasses a huge magic circle of towering hemlock trees (seven times seven I should say there are) mathematically placed, dark Druidical, and centuries old; their heavy-hung drooping branches sway in solemn gesture as with some mighty import. And within that eerie circle there is nothing but one vast shadowed lawn; nothing at all that the eye may see, but the feeling you get of a mystic presence is beyond the power of words to describe. Flashing visions you get—just a fleeting thought—of fairies in moonlight revel, and dim dream-figures of all the fair ladies and

dauntless heroes that poesy and music have conjured to life.

I was literally agasp and enthralled by the splendid spell of that glooming circle when first I drove up to Madame Sembrich's mountain home. But the home itself I soon found to be an abode of brightness—all laughter and sunshine.

The Diva's beloved friend, Miss Julie de Coppet—herself the spirit of grace and geniality—was awaiting us at the door. And a moment later, stepping in from the flower-garden, appeared Madame Sembrich, a trowel in her hand, a smile on her lips and a sunbonnet on her head!

Yes—a real sunbonnet.

But let me whisper something: that sunbonnet was small and harmonized perfectly with Madame's old-rose morning frock of mousseline-de-soie. The artist-instinct is ever present, in small things as in great. Indeed so becoming was that simple sunbonnet that we induced her to keep it on as we all seated ourselves on the spacious veranda overlooking the lake.

It was still early in the season. Madame regretted that her group of pupils were not yet there, that I might meet and hear them.

The names of most of these pupils would astonish you, for they are names you have already seen on programs. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that to be known as a pupil of Sembrich is tantamount to holding in your pocket a signed contract with La Scala in Milan or the Metropolitan in New York.

Madame Sembrich will teach only those whom she wishes to teach—whether beggar or prince it matters not—only those endowed with talent and youth—no

others will she listen to. Many apply but few are chosen. I know this, not from Madame Sembrich herself, but from would-be pupils—wealthy ones, beautiful, eager and ambitious—who have failed to enlist her interest. Not only youth, talent and voice must the future opera-star possess, but also patience, determination and tireless application. These latter qualities can not always be gaged at once, so some are admitted but soon sifted out. "The Americans have plenty of talent" (this is the Madame herself speaking), "and there are many fine voices; they have ambition, too, but the patient, steady, unending work comes hard on many of them. They are eager for pleasure and success. They are full of life and nervous energy; the plodding persistence of the true artist they find it difficult to acquire. They wish only to sing—not to study. And O! the trouble I have to make them enunciate well—be true to the vowel. Some girls are with me several months before they realize that they constantly say "Ah-ee" instead of the pure "Ah-aa."

The subject of diction led to the eternal question of Grand Opera in English. Her reply was ready and clear. "If you mean Grand Opera in translation—that is unthinkable, for then the force of both music and words are distorted. The composer has written his music in conformity to, and inspired by, the original libretto. He emphasizes, retards and climaxes his music—even shapes his themes to conform to the idiom of his own language. To transpose these phrases, to mate a single syllable with a note not designed for it, is monstrous. There are some consonants and diphthongs hardly singable on high notes, and often a forceful monosyllable that effectively portrays the emotion of the moment, is wholly negated by a phrase in the music never intended for it.

But Grand Opera written by the composer for English words, and enunciated as clearly as John McCormick does—why then it is beautiful."

Again she shrugged her shoulders, with a sigh and a smile.

"But the trouble I have to make students realize the importance of clean diction! Why, I find myself spending most of my time teaching pronunciation instead of opera-arias and interpretation."

But this régime is evidently harder on the pupils than on Madame Sembrich. She joys in it all; her life's latest and most lasting work. She realizes that her superb art will be carried on by this younger generation of great singers she is starting upon notable careers. And the joy of this work—this far-reaching power she wields—lends a new glow to Madame Sembrich's always beautiful face. She has been through long sick-spells and sorrow-spells. (The loss of her life's companion, Dr. Stengel, was as the loss of a prop of oak to the stalk of a rare and exalted flower.) And three times she has broken her arm. (She jests about this; calls it her specialty). But in spite of all set-backs, Madame Sembrich is radiant and beautiful as ever. All who lately have seen her tell the same tale. She is young—*actually* young, not merely in spirit—but in the flesh: eyes, smile, hair, and figure, all proclaim this. She well proves her own statement:

"Music knows no age." She said more on this subject. "The public always asks of an artist 'how old is she?'" Another shrug of the splendid Sembrich shoulders—"How foolish!—if she sings well or plays well—what matters her age? And always, too, they are asking, 'has she temperament?' 'Temperament'—'temperament!'—as

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SEMBRICH AS "ROSINA" IN "THE BARBER OF SEVILLE"

tho that were everything. One hears of nothing else nowadays. When I was a girl the singing-art depended more upon a great voice and great work."

And a great soul, she might have added; in her own life and art this has always been evident. She has never hesitated to give herself, lavishly, to all she came near. The story is told of how years ago, when serenaded at midnight by musicians in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, she impulsively opened her window and answered back with a song—regardless of her high-priced voice and the night air. That is Sembrich for you. She very nearly gave her life during the war in striving to help her homeland, Poland. Her long two years of serious illness was directly due to the overstrain of that period. I saw her myself, speaking two and three times a day at big meetings, begging for funds, when she scarcely could hide the persistent cough that had clutched upon her. Such good health had been hers all her life that she knew no alarm. And every night at that time, as head of the Relief Committee, she penned with her own hand, notes of thanks to every contributor—a courtesy so unusual and so greatly appreciated that in many cases it brought forth a further donation.

Madame Sembrich has never done anything by halves. Throughout the whole world she is loved. Those who have not heard her in person have heard her on the victrola. Her voice is preserved, and her art—her mastery of music and of tone-production—lives on through her pupils.

Again I say that no artist in retirement—save the immortal Liszt—has ever wielded so much of power and potency, coupled with love and devotion, as does the supreme Sembrich.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"SEMIRAMIDE"

ALL great prima donnas have in their repertoire the majority of famous operas, but through fitness of physique or temperament or quality of voice they become associated with certain rôles more than others. Sometimes it is merely a caprice of the public that holds them to a particular line of operas. Madame Sembrich is regarded as the great exponent of the old Italian school. Among her thirty-seven operas, "Semiramide" is one in which New Yorkers have not heard her; but it is in some respects the most typical of its kind.

"Semiramide" belongs to the old style of Italian operas. It is light in substance, but glistening with scales and cadenzas that are scattered over it like spangles upon tulle. Rossini's music is always beautiful but conveys little depth of meaning, and it impresses the modern musical taste like a meal of bonbons. Altho Semiramis lived hundreds of years before the Christian era, we listen in vain for any ancient atmosphere to the composition or for the *"melodrame tragico,"* as designated by the libretto. This music would be as suitable to the "Barber of Seville" as to the "Queen of Babylon." In other words, the old operas were a series of separate songs adapted to a connected story, whereas we now expect the score so thoroughly to embody the text that the two are inseparable.

"Semiramide," however, bears several claims to distinction that prevent the possibility of extinction. It is the opera *par excellence* of duets. They are the delight-

ful, old-fashioned kind, wherein the two voices are side by side, only separated by a perfect third; and when the conductor has whipped up a good tempo away they go like a span of horses, over hills and valleys of scales and arpeggios, bridged-over intervals, and clumps of trills. Differing from all other operas, this one gives as much prominence to the contralto as to the soprano. They must have equal facility of execution; and, indeed, none of the rôles are exempt from this demand. Tenor, contralto, barytone, and bass vie with each other in performing dangerous feats of vocal agility. There are passages where they all, one after another, run up a scale and land on a certain note, like athletes jumping from a spring-board. We smile at such display, and are inclined to regard the opera as one big solfeggio; but let it not be forgotten that this is the old Italian style, and interesting from this point of view.

Another claim to lasting fame is its overture—one of the prettiest, happiest, showiest, orchestral compositions extant. It is a stock program piece, being simple enough for any orchestra to perform and yet rousing enough always to elicit applause.

The opening scene represents a temple wherein *Oroe,* the chief of the Magi, is discovered kneeling before an altar. He has received a celestial revelation of some dark crime that is awaiting vengeance, and his first short recitative refers to this secret. Arising from his knees, *Oroe* orders the gates of the temple to be opened. The Assyrian multitude enter bearing offerings and garlands, while they sing a light melody that would do for a modern topical song. *Idrenus,* an Indian prince, also comes in with his attendants, bearing incense and offerings. He is the tenor, but unimportant, because this opera has no

love-scene, and consequently little use for a tenor. *Assur,* an Assyrian potentate, is another devout supplicant at the altar of Belus. We soon learn the occasion of these earnest efforts to propitiate the gods: *Semiramis,* the queen, will to-day select a successor to the late King *Ninus.*

A very good example of what we consider the incongruities of the old school is found in these first two arias of *Idrenus* and *Assur.* The tenor comes in alone and delivers a flourishing solo, ornate as his costume. Then *Assur,* the basso, makes his entrance and sings in a lower key the same remarkable pyrotechnics. This antagonizes the fundamental rule of modern opera, which requires each character to maintain a musical individuality. There is some further conversation in the form of a terzetto between *Idrenus, Assur,* and *Oroe,* and the fact is disclosed that *Assur* expects the queen's choice to fall on him.

Another light and bright chorus announces the entrance of *Semiramis.* She is represented as young and beautiful, altho she is a widow and the mother of a son who mysteriously disappeared years before the story opens. But radiant as is her appearance, *Semiramis* opens the ceremonies with uneasiness, for she has determined to make *Arsaces* the future king. He is a young army officer, and there is no just reason why he should be favored; but the queen has become enamored of him. *Arsaces,* however, is unconscious of her infatuation. She has summoned him to this ceremony; but he has not yet arrived, and for this reason she hesitates. In a quartet that is worked up like a rondo upon a very pleasing theme, the others urge her to begin. She reluctantly steps forward, but at her first mention of the dead king there is

a flash of lightning and the sacred fires are extinguished. The people regard this as a dire omen. *Oroe* glances knowingly at both *Semiramis* and *Assur* as he again refers to a crime that has aroused the wrath of the gods. He orders the ceremonies to be postponed pending the arrival of a sacred oracle from Memphis. The Queen and her attendants withdraw, and the temple is vacated.

The orchestra plays through several pages of sixty-fourth and thirty-second notes, after which the interesting and important *Arsaces* enters with two slaves who bring a casket. *Arsaces* is always a very youthful and impossible-looking general, in spite of his glittering cuirass, for be it known this is the contralto rôle, and, musically speaking, a very great one.

We learn from his first recitative that this casket contains precious documents and relics of the late king which have been guarded and concealed by Phradates, the supposed father of *Arsaces.* Phradates has recently died, and in compliance with his request *Arsaces* brings these treasures to the high priest. We also learn that the young general is puzzled over the Queen's summons; and last, but not least, we learn that he is in love with the beautiful *Princess Azema.* The mere mention of her name starts him singing a rapturous song, bubbling over with brilliant roulades. After presenting his casket to the high priest, *Arsaces* encounters *Assur,* who soon makes it known that he also loves the fair *Azema.* This so maddens *Arsaces* that he resolves at once to ask *Semiramis* for the hand of the Princess. These rivals cordially hate each other, but Rossini inspires them to sing the same melodies, and their voices mingle in beautiful harmony of tone and rhythm.

The second rising of the curtain reveals *Semiramis*

reclining under a bower in her palace garden. She is surrounded by maidens and slaves who sing languid, luxuriant melodies for her diversion. Rossini's style is well suited to this scene. As the arias are presented one by one, it is like unfolding the contents of an Assyrian treasure-chest full of shimmering silks and glittering jewels. Among this collection there is one gem called the "Bel raggio," a name as famous in its way as the Koh-i-noor. This musical brilliant belongs to *Queen Semiramis,* who displays its scintillating beauty with evident pride. The "Bel raggio" is one of the four great corner-stones of the bravura singer's repertoire, of which the remaining three are: "Una voce poco fa," also by Rossini; the Dinorah "Shadow Song," and the "Lakmé" "Bell Song." When listening to "Bel raggio" one should never try to follow the words or even wonder what she is saying. Just listen to the music. Those radiant, ravishing, intoxicating warbles and runs tell one plainly enough that she is happy, and this is sufficient.

Semiramis is awaiting *Arsaces* and the oracle from Memphis. The latter is received first, and bears the cheering words, "Thy peace shall be restored with the return of Arsaces." True to the nature of oracles, this one has a double meaning, and *Semiramis* construes it in the wrong way. When *Arsaces* enters there follows a bevy of famous duets. But the conversation is quite at cross-purposes. *Arsaces* tells of a long-cherished love, which *Semiramis* thinks is for herself. She promises that all his hopes shall be realized, whereupon the two wander off side by side through a forest of cadences, roulades and scales. They sometimes become separated, when the soprano pauses to run up the scale-ladder and pluck a brilliant high note, or the contralto lingers to pick

up tones that are rich and full as fallen fruit; but they finally emerge together, trilling high and low like birds from a thicket.

The third scene represents a magnificent hall in the palace. There are, of course, a throne and other "properties," but most conspicuous is the tomb or mausoleum of *Ninus*. For a second time the Assyrian nobleman and people gather to hear the appointment of a new king. As they sing a sweeping march, *Semiramis* enters more gorgeously arrayed than ever. She takes her place at the throne, and with an imperious gesture commands allegiance to the king of her choice. These regal phrases contain such a prodigality of dazzling colorature that we are reminded of the far-famed hanging gardens devised by this same extravagant Queen. In the matter of lavish display the music of "Semiramide" is strikingly appropriate. *Assur, Arsaces, Idrenus,* and *Oroe* vow obedience, and their hymn-like ensemble is one of the grandest themes Rossini ever composed. Like the prayer from Weber's "Freischütz," this quintet has long held a place in church choir-books, and a more religious and inspiring melody could hardly be imagined. The soprano scatters delicious appoggiaturas and cadenzas above the steady and noble ensemble like flowers upon an altar. The "Semiramide Quintet" is another one of its claims to lasting fame.

In a lighter vein is the Queen's next proclamation, to the effect that the future king shall also be her husband. This arouses general surprize. But when she finally designates *Arsaces,* the amazement on all sides is loud. *Assur* demands justice from the Queen, insinuating some secret compact that she dare not disregard. He is haughtily

silenced by *Semiramis,* who at the same time bestows upon him the hand of fair *Azema.*

Poor *Arsaces* is beside himself. He tries to explain, but the Queen will listen to no remonstrances. An altar is brought forward, and the priests are about to pronounce the marriage bans when a hollow, subterranean sound and distant thunder cause consternation. The people are horrified to behold the tomb of *Ninus* slowly open and its occupant step forth. Turning to *Arsaces,* the ghost bids him avenge a terrible crime: "With courage into my tomb descend; there to my ashes a victim thou shalt offer. But first obey the counsel of the priest." The Ghost disappears, and the act closes with a strong chorus of dismay. *Semiramis* leads the singing, and for once her music has only prim quarter-notes and half-notes: her colorature is all frightened away .

The next act contains an interview between *Assur* and *Semiramis,* wherein we learn about the crime so often referred to. The late *King Ninus* was poisoned by *Assur,* who had been promised the throne. But the guilty Queen has since preferred *Arsaces,* and this explains *Assur's* great anger. He threatens to kill the young favorite; but *Semiramis* has resumed her ostentatious manner and music, and will not heed his words.

There follows a scene in the Queen's apartment. She is still striving to win *Arsaces,* but her overtures repel him more than ever. He has just returned from an interview with the priest. The contents of the casket have been revealed to him, and he shows *Semiramis* a paper proving the startling fact that *Arsaces* himself is her long-lost son. He has also learned that *Ninus,* his father, was murdered. Remorse promptly overtakes the Queen. She weeps and wails in chromatics and scales that quite

touch *Arsaces*. They sing a glorious duet that is like a benediction, so noble and pure are its harmonies. It is called "Giorno d'orrore" (day of horror). *Arsaces* bids his mother adieu. He is going to the tomb to avenge his father's death, tho he knows not how nor whom he shall strike. It rests with the gods to guide him; he only obeys the command. There follows another smoothly flowing duet resembling all the others in its simple structure, unmistakable rhythm, and prominent melody.

The finale of "Semiramide" has little to commend it, being absurd in action and presenting only one pleasing or noticeable theme. This is a dainty, quaint violin passage that delighted us in the overture, but which we never thought of connecting with a tragic climax. How different is this tomb music from that of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet!" There the marvelous harmonies are like sweet dreams accompanying the sleep of death, but here we are only conscious of the "deep, damp vault, the darkness and the worm."

The chief absurdity of this scene lies in the fact that it should be too dark for the characters to see each other and yet it must be light enough for the audience to see everything. Another incongruity is the assembling of all the principals and a good-sized chorus in this tomb where we expected *Arsaces* alone. But it is explained that *Assur* heard of the hero's coming and planned to follow with the intention of killing him; *Oroe* heard of *Assur's* plan and brings an armed guard to protect *Arsaces!* and, finally, *Semiramis* follows because she is anxious about everybody and everything.

They enter at different times; grope around among tombs, and pretend not to see each other. *Arsaces* finally hears and recognizes the voice of *Assur*. He has no doubt

that the gods have sent *Assur* to be the victim. The hero promptly stabs in the direction of the voice, but because it is so very dark he happens to kill *Semiramis* instead of *Assur*. But this mistake does not much affect either the music or the action. The final chorus of the opera is as light and bright as the first.